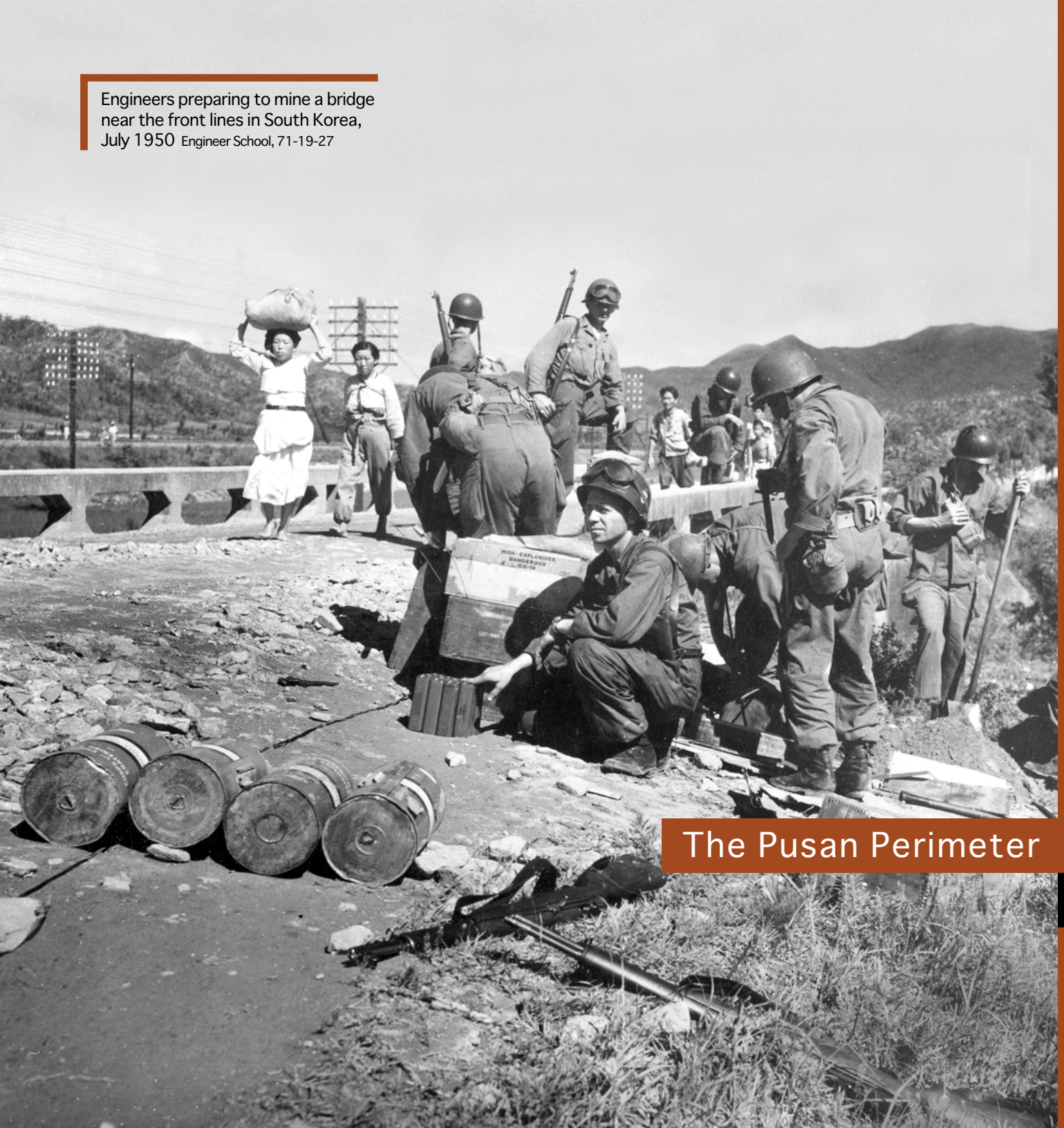
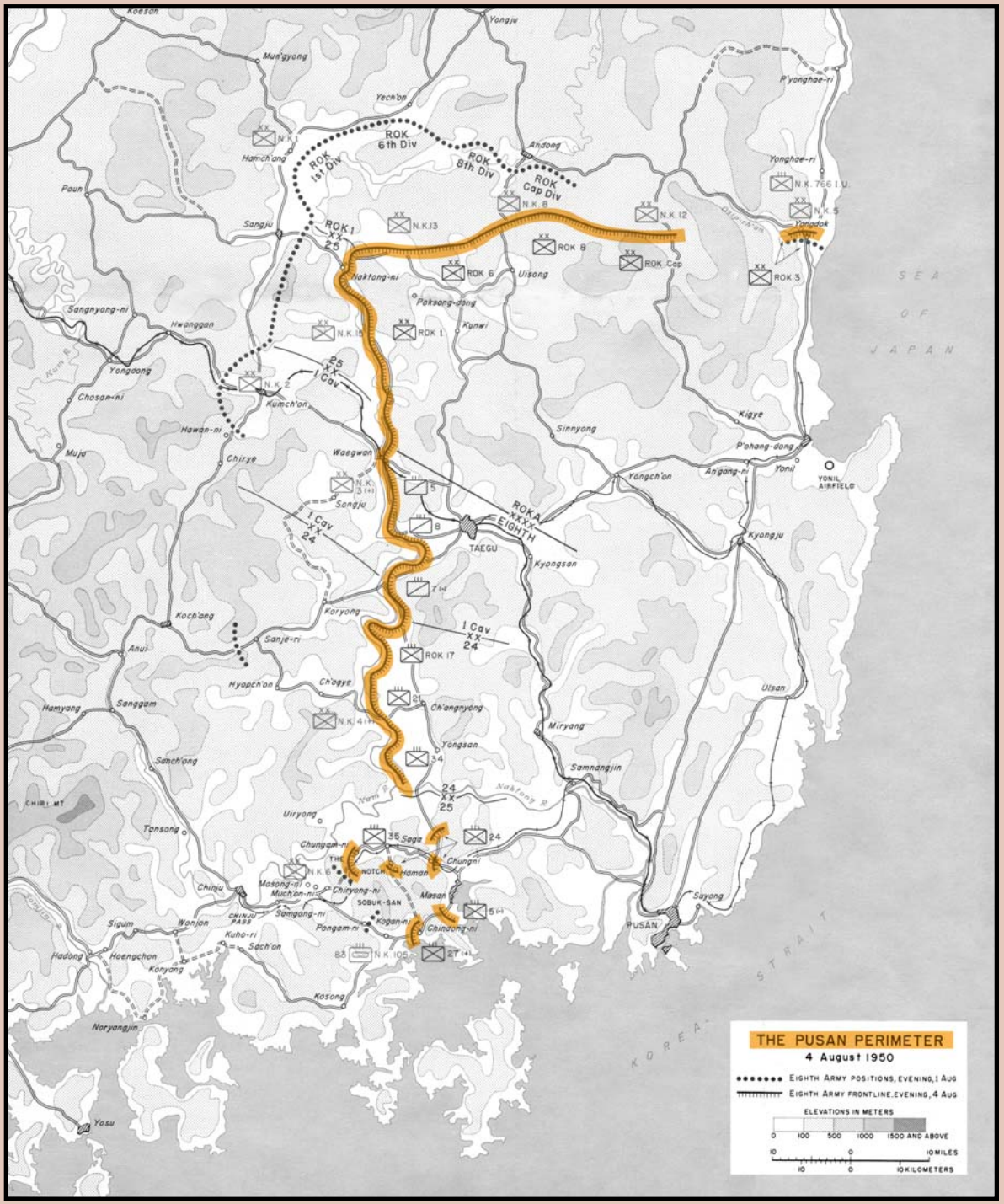
Engineers preparing to mine a bridge near the front lines in South Korea, July 1950 Engineer School, 71-19-27



Chapter 1

The Pusan Perimeter

June–September 1950



In the weeks following the North Korean invasion, Republic of Korea (ROK) and U.S. Army units fought a protracted retrograde movement as they slowly withdrew toward a defensive position around the port of Pusan on the southeast tip of Korea.

While the U.S. rushed reinforcements to Korea, in early August Lt. Gen. Walton Walker, commander of the Eighth Army, established a defensive perimeter around Pusan that eventually included four U.S. and five ROK divisions. Fighting in and around the perimeter was intense, but with the arrival of additional troops, heavy weapons, and American air support, the defenders were slowly able to blunt the attack and stabilize the situation. The fighting around Pusan soon sapped the strength of the North Korean Army, and by mid-September, the UN forces in Pusan were poised to launch a counterattack.

The Pusan Perimeter

Chapter 1

Introduction

On 28 June 1950, three days after the North Koreans took the offensive, the South Korean capital fell. Seoul is only some 30 miles south of the 38th Parallel, and the defending Republic of Korea (ROK) units could not stem the invasion. The Communist tank columns then continued the attack south of the city against weakening South Korean resistance. Although the armies of the two Koreas were not all that different in size, South Korea lacked tanks, aircraft, artillery, adequate anti-tank weapons, and M-1 rifles. By contrast, the North Koreans began their offensive with modern Russian equipment including aircraft, such as the battle-proven IL-10 "Stormovik" fighter-bomber, automatic weapons, and tanks with 85-mm main guns.

From his headquarters in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur took immediate action to prevent a complete disaster and to gain time to create a defensive zone in Korea's southeast. Warships and American airplanes from Japan blasted North Korean troops and installations. At least in the air, the initial American response quickly prevailed, achieving air superiority over South Korea by 10 July. On the ground, however, the challenge was far more difficult and the initial American response woefully inadequate. The first U.S. ground forces sent to Korea came from the 24th Infantry Division. Although it was the smallest (12,197 men) among the divisions available to him in Japan, MacArthur chose the 24th Infantry Division because it was stationed in southern Japan, near ports closest to Korea, and he knew that time was critical. *TASK FORCE SMITH,* two reinforced companies from the division's 21st Infantry Regiment, was rushed to the South Korean port of Pusan on 2 July 1950. Heading north by truck, these elements made contact with enemy troops on 5 July 1950 near Osan, Korea.

A strong force of North Korean infantry and 33 tanks struck *TASK FORCE SMITH*. For seven hours the outnumbered Americans held on, knocking out four tanks and killing 42 of the enemy. The North Koreans flanked the American positions, forcing a withdrawal and inflicting 150 casualties on the task force. The rest of the 24th Division caught up to *TASK FORCE SMITH* and fought a delaying action through central Korea, while three other U.S. divisions (2d Infantry, 25th Infantry, and 1st Cavalry Divisions) prepared to cross from Japan. Elements of the original eight ROK divisions tried to recover after the breakthrough and performed well against those North Korean units not supported by tanks.

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Korea

The mountainous Korean Peninsula encompasses 85,000 square miles. The width of the peninsula varies between 90 and 200 miles and it is between 525 and 600 miles long. The mountains are highest in the north, with some peaks rising to 8,500 feet. The Taebaek Range extends along much of the east coast.

In 1950 Korea had a population of 30 million people, of which 21 million lived in the south and 9 million in the north. At that time, although only 20 percent of the country was considered arable, 70 percent of the population secured its livelihood from agriculture. Korean summers are hot and humid with a monsoon season generally lasting from June to September. In the winter, cold, biting winds sweep down from central Asia.

During the next four weeks, American forces fought a number of sharp engagements against the advancing North Koreans. None of these battles, e.g., the Kum River line, Taejon, Sangju, Masan, could stem the onrushing enemy tide, nor was that the immediate objective. American field commanders sought to delay the North Koreans while executing a retrograde action to a sustainable defensive line. Unfortunately, during the action around Sangju, accusations arose of American forces "bugging out." Although these were not the first such charges of American soldiers fleeing before the North Koreans they were the most serious and widespread. Because some of the soldiers involved were from the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, the Army's ill-considered segregation policy came under increasing scrutiny and harsh criticism. Maj. Gen. William B. Kean relieved the commander of the 24th Infantry, Col. Horton V. White, when the regiment's hasty retreat threatened the orderly American withdrawal to the southeast.

On 12 July, Eighth Army's Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker assumed command of all ground forces in Korea and began establishing a defensive line. Although a few Sherman tanks and a handful of the effective new 3.5-inch bazookas eventually reached troops in Korea, initially the 24th Division lacked the adequate weapons and well-trained men necessary to face the Russian-equipped North Koreans. *TASK FORCE SMITH,* for example, had discovered how ineffective the American 75-mm recoilless rifle and 2.36-inch bazooka were against Russian-made T34 tanks.

After loading their possessions into a small cart, a Korean family flees south
RG 111, SC-355017

Throughout July, battered American and ROK forces fought a 75-mile retrograde action along Korea's dusty "roads." The mornings often brought fog and sometimes rain, but most days were oppressively hot. The unpaved roads were shared with thousands of Korean civilians fleeing the invaders. Refugees not only choked the few roads, but also made communications

more difficult. They often cut out sections of telephone wire to improvise harnesses for their meager possessions. Later, when strengthened Allied forces would move forward again, the image of American forces moving up toward the front while refugees streamed in the opposite direction would become a familiar one.

By 4 August, U.S. and South Korean forces generally withdrew to a defensive position anchored by Pusan on Korea's coast. It was critical that this port, only 120 miles from Japan, be held open. The so-called Pusan Perimeter was a rough rectangle, approximately 200 square miles of terrain, bounded by the Naktong River in the west, the Korea Straits to the south, the Sea of Japan in the east, and by rugged mountains above Waegwan to Yongdok in the north. With his defensive line around Taegu and Pusan, Gen. Walker directed an army composed of four U.S. divisions [1st Cavalry, 2d, 24th, and 25th Infantry], the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, and five ROK divisions [approximately 45,000 men]. Advance elements of other units, including the 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) from Hawaii, also had begun to arrive.

MacArthur and Walker made a vigorous stand all along the line, although the term "line" is not entirely accurate in this instance. The Pusan Perimeter was in reality a collection of loosely connected strongpoints, around which the North Koreans frequently infiltrated. By early August, UN combat forces outnumbered the Communist attackers by perhaps 20,000 men, although this numerical advantage was not fully appreciated at the time. The UN defenders now had the advantage of interior lines of communication, while the attacking North Koreans were stretched along a long and tenuous supply line. On 7 August, *TASK FORCE KEAN,* [named for Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, 25th Division commanding general] opened an offensive on the perimeter's left flank to protect Pusan from attack. In the center of the line, the enemy tried to take the rail junction at Taegu, but Walker contained the attack. The North Koreans struck again, but UN air power had previously destroyed many of their tanks and killed many of their veteran soldiers—untrained recruits took their places. The North Koreans herded refugees in front of their attacks to confuse U.S. troops, but that tactic ultimately failed. Late in August, UN forces drove back several more attacks. The bravery of the many soldiers and Marines killed in action prevented the North Koreans from driving UN forces from the perimeter and into the sea.

Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny's interview introduces this section on the Pusan Perimeter. He offers his perspective as a member of the Plans Section, G-3 [plans and policy] at MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters, and speculates about the possibility of a North Korean invasion.

Engineer activities were crucial to the successful fall back into the Pusan Perimeter. The first engineer unit in combat in Korea was Lt. Col. Peter C. Hyzer's 3d Engineer Combat Battalion, arriving in Pusan on 5 July in support of the 24th Infantry Division. Engineer activities in those first weeks of the war consisted primarily of planting mines and blowing bridges. The battalion also supported the division by maintaining the dirt and gravel roads as the division pulled back its men and equipment. Sgt. George D. Libby, Company C, 3d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), won the Medal of Honor supporting Gen. Dean's defense of Taejon. The battalion continued in a defensive posture until Eighth Army broke out of the Pusan Perimeter in September.

Another unit arriving during the early days of the war, the 72d Engineer Combat Company (ECC), returned to Korea from Hawaii, landing at Pusan on 31 July 1950. First Lt. James A. Johnson was an engineer platoon leader who also found himself serving as a combat infantryman. The company spent the early days in Korea transporting ammunition to the front, supporting *TASK FORCE KEAN,* preparing defensive positions, and fighting as infantry. Johnson's recollections introduce two controversial subjects: the performance of the 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea, and the still-unresolved issue of how and when engineer troops should be attached to infantry units and used.

When the war began, Brig. Gen. Garrison "Gar" H. Davidson was chief of staff, Sixth Army. His first assignment was to prepare the 2d Infantry Division for overseas movement (POM) to Korea from Fort Lewis, Washington. He arrived in Korea before that division, having been assigned to Eighth Army. He reported to Gen. Walker, who directed him to lay out a defensive line around Pusan. Following this assignment, Gen. Davidson was assigned to the 24th Infantry Division and later took a 24th Division task force to P'ohang-dong to plug a hole in the American line.

Second Lt. James L. Trayers, fresh from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, and without basic officer training, reported in to the 1st Cavalry Division in August 1950 and was assigned to Company D. His duties included laying minefields, clearing roadways by sweeping for mines, and building bridges. His experiences exemplify the problems any young, inexperienced, newly-commissioned 2d lieutenant faces when in combat for the first time.

Capt. Lawrence B. Farnum describes his call to active duty and assignment to the 2d Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington. He recalls the efforts at getting the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion up to strength in personnel and equipment, and in training the personnel for going to war. Capt. Farnum further describes the battalion going on line upon his arrival in Korea, and the problems encountered by engineers at-

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tempting to fight as infantry without normal infantry weapons or support. As a result, the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion suffered numerous casualties. With the X Corps landing at Inch'on 15 September 1950 and the Eighth Army breakout from the Pusan Perimeter shortly thereafter, the 2d Engineers worked on roads and bridges on the way north to Yongdungp'o during the rest of September and October 1950.

First Lt. Charles M. Bussey brings an African American perspective to engineer service in Korea in excerpts from his own written account of the war. Bussey describes his service as commander of the all-black 77th Engineer Combat Company (ECC), during which time he was promoted to captain.

On 15 September, the U.S. X Corps with the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division landed at Inch'on, well behind enemy lines. The forces in the Pusan perimeter began their breakout, streaking northward to connect with X Corps in hopes of entrapping much of the North Korean army. 

Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Rowny X Corps Engineer

Colonel Rowny was a member of General MacArthur's planning staff and kept a wary eye on events unfolding on the Korean Peninsula. After reviewing intelligence reports and cable traffic in early June 1950, Rowny urged his superiors to be alert for a possible attack in Korea.

I was sent to Japan in 1949 to join the Plans Section, G-3, of General MacArthur's headquarters. There was an interesting windfall occasioned by my early arrival. The officer I was replacing was not ready to leave and the headquarters didn't want a long overlap. As a result, I was given an open ticket—air, rail, and ship—to travel around Japan for 30 days. By coincidence, a civilian historian/anthropologist, Dr. Kenneth Morrow, had also planned a 30-day tour. I enjoyed his company and profited a great deal from his expertise. We started from Tokyo and went down the east coast of Japan, around the southern islands, and up the west coast. We then went to Hokkaido, returning to Tokyo by way of the east coast of Honshu.

Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, commander of X Corps, studies a sand-table terrain map at X Corps headquarters in Korea, October 1950. Lt. Col. Rowny is second from left Rowny Collection

While my purpose was not to inspect or check on military installations, I could not help but note the failings of the so-called "occupation force." In every village and hamlet there were small detachments of U.S. troops not serving any useful function. There was no need for occupation forces in Japan because there was no danger of a Japanese military revival. In fact, our troops were only interfering with the Japanese civil authorities who were functioning well. General MacArthur's instructions were carried out in the name of the emperor.

When I returned from the tour, I wrote a trip report to Maj. Gen. Edward Almond, the chief of staff to General MacArthur. I said that our so-called "occupation forces" were not carrying out any real function; in fact, they were interfering with the Japanese civilian authorities. Almond directed Col. Dewitt Armstrong, the G-3, to have me make a study of the occupation. My recommendation that the troops be pulled back to training camps for possible use elsewhere was approved. The "elsewhere" I had in mind was, of course, Korea. To replace the occupation forces, I recommended the formation of a "Japanese Self Defense Force," patterned after the U.S. National Guard. Their mission would be to handle disasters and maintain law and order.

In retrospect, the idea of pulling out our occupation forces didn't happen any too soon. We were still pulling out the remainder of the troops in June 1950

Col. Edward L. Rowny, March 1953 Rowny Collection

when the Korean War broke out. But we had been able to reassemble some of the troops into regimental-sized units that were available to go to Korea soon after the North Koreans invaded South Korea.

This planning for the retraining of the occupation force and the Japanese Self Defense Force was done by a rather small number of officers. As I recall, there were not more than eight or nine officers in the entire plans section.

I worked exclusively on the military side, but I made friends with a number of planners on the civilian side through Dr. Morrow, with whom I had traveled around Japan. I was fascinated with the way General MacArthur's civilian staff, SCAP (Supreme Commander, Allied Powers) was restructuring the entire political, social, and economic fabric of the Japanese government. This staff contained a number of the best minds in the U.S.—all experts and highly regarded in their respective fields. MacArthur was revolutionizing—and this is an understatement—the entire Japanese society. He drew up a new constitution, redesigned the judiciary and economic systems, and set up industrial standards. Japanese industry had a very low reputation up to that time because of shoddy workmanship and low standards of quality. MacArthur turned all that around; in fact, the Toyotas and Sonys that are so reliably built today can trace their success to MacArthur's directives.

Reaction to Dean Acheson's Statement

I remember well how stunned we were when Secretary of State Dean Acheson made his public statement that "left Korea outside the area of U.S. strategic interest." It would have been one thing to say privately among ourselves that Korea would no longer be within our sphere of interest, but to say this publicly seemed to us the height of folly and irresponsibility. We were shocked that anyone in a high place, and especially a man with the reputation that Acheson enjoyed, would make such a statement.

I might add that now, in hindsight, I feel even more strongly about Acheson's statement. On one occasion a high-ranking Soviet negotiator told me in Geneva, in the late 1970s, that it was hard for the Soviets to understand Americans. He said that the Soviets were surprised when Acheson, in

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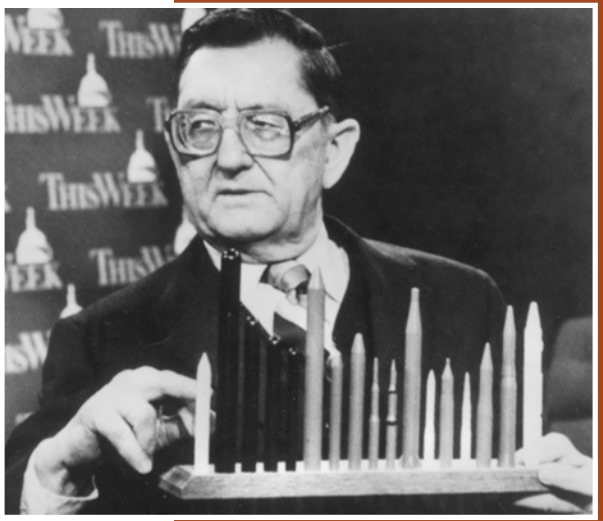


Edward L. Rowny compares Soviet and U.S. missiles, November 1974 Rowny Collection

1950, announced that Korea was outside the area of U.S. strategic interest. This caused the Soviets, he said, to "unleash" North Korea and authorize them to invade South Korea. "At that," he said, "the United States went back on its word and mobilized not only its own forces but called on the United Nations to come to the aid of Seoul. We can't trust the United States to keep its word. The United States is very volatile; it changes its mind."

"You'd better believe it," I said, not wanting to disabuse the Soviets of our volatility. I told him that Americans are slow to anger, but once aroused, are quick to react when our national interest is threatened.

Up until the time the North Koreans attacked south of the 38th Parallel, I worked on plans for the Japanese Self Defense Force and on contingency plans. I worked in the planning section drawing up plans in the event the North Koreans attacked South Korea. I remember sending a memorandum to my boss early in June 1950 telling him that from reading intelligence reports and reporting cables I believed we should be more alert to a possible attack in Korea. My boss, Col. Armstrong, sent my memo to the chief of staff, Gen. Almond. He, in turn, sent it to the G-2, (intelligence section) Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby. The G-2 took a dim view of anybody in G-3 interfering in his business. He said the North Koreans would not attack. Moreover, he said, G-3 should in the future send memos on intelligence matters to him, and he would decide whether or not to send them to the chief of staff. Fortunately, Gen. Almond did not listen to Willough-by. He sent my memo to General MacArthur.

I remember sending a memorandum to my boss early in June 1950 telling him that from reading intelligence reports and reporting cables I believed we should be more alert to a possible attack in Korea.

When the Korean conflict broke out in June of 1950, by coincidence, one might say poetic justice, I was the G-3 duty officer that Sunday that the North Koreans attacked. When the news came in I went to see the G-2 duty officer and we called the chief of staff. He told us to meet him in General MacArthur's apartment.

General MacArthur said, "Rowny, are you going to say 'I told you so'?" I didn't say anything but must have looked like the cat that swallowed the canary. I recall that General MacArthur was quite calm and appeared unperturbed. He directed Gen. Almond to call the military staff back to work immediately. Gen. Almond had the staff prepare messages for MacArthur to send to Seoul and Washington. MacArthur, meanwhile, was on the phone to Seoul, Washington, FECOM (Far East Command) military headquarters, and the Japanese government. He ordered all U.S. troops in Japan to return to barracks.

I disappeared into the Dai Ichi Building. For the next several days my wife brought me clean clothing and toilet articles. We worked around the clock, except for time off for catnaps on cots in our offices. For a week we worked, slept, and ate in the Dai Ichi Building.

It was a very chaotic period. Most of our contacts in Seoul were with a remarkable individual, Ambassador John J. Muccio, our ambassador in Seoul. He was well organized, calm, and courageous. We were getting better estimates about the situation from him than from our military headquarters. This, in hindsight, is understandable because the military had its own problems trying to cope with the enemy. However, we were fortunate that Muccio was a broad-gauge and capable Foreign Service officer. He believed our troops could be organized to stand and fight. He did not think that we should simply pick up and move to the rear.

Several days after the attack, a crisis developed within MacArthur's staff. His public relations advisor couldn't cope with the situation. Reporters had started to arrive from the U.S. almost immediately and were putting General MacArthur under a great deal of pressure. On one occasion, the public relations officer, having fortified his courage with several stiff drinks, passed out while briefing reporters. Later that day I received a two-line directive from the Supreme Commander. It read:

1. *Effective immediately, you will—in addition to your other duties—act as my official spokesman.*
2. *You will tell the press everything they need to know and nothing they need not know.*

Signed: Douglas MacArthur.

General Douglas MacArthur discusses the military situation in Korea with Ambassador John Muccio (left). Maj. Gen. Edward Almond is at right
U.S. Army photo

It was a very simple, direct order. While it didn't give me much guidance, it certainly gave me a lot of freedom. I was the spokesman and continued to work in the Plans Section until we left Tokyo to join the invasion forces headed for Korea. I think this was around 5 September, about 10 days before we landed at Inch'on. During the early days of the war we were looking everywhere we could throughout the Pacific Theater and throughout the Army for troops to send to Korea to stabilize the situation.

Lieutenant Colonel Peter C. Hyzer 3d Engineer Combat Battalion

When news of the North Korean invasion reached Japan, Colonel Hyzer was given command of the 3d Engineer Combat Battalion of the 24th Infantry Division and rushed to Korea. In savage fighting from Taejon southeast into the Pusan Perimeter, the 24th Division fought a retrograde action, meter by meter, buying time until the 25th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division could arrive from Japan.

As American and South Korean forces retreated, engineers prepared bridges for demolition to halt the North Korean advance Engineer School, 71-19-28

From MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) I went to Japan in 1949. I had to leave my family behind. There was no concurrent travel at that time so they came over about six months later.

Once in Japan, I went to general headquarters (GHQ) in Tokyo and I said, "I want to be a combat engineer officer. I want to go down south and have a combat battalion or a combat group, or maybe a construction group, to learn to use some of this new technology that I've learned in civil school." They said, "Okay; we'll send you down to Yokohama to Eighth Army."

I went down to Eighth Army, and Pat Strong—Pascal Strong—was the Army Engineer. He was a colonel then and a brigadier general later. He said, "Well, yeah, I know. You want to go down with a troop unit. Fine. Meantime, we need you right here in headquarters." So, I stayed in headquarters in the Operations Division.

Getting into the Action

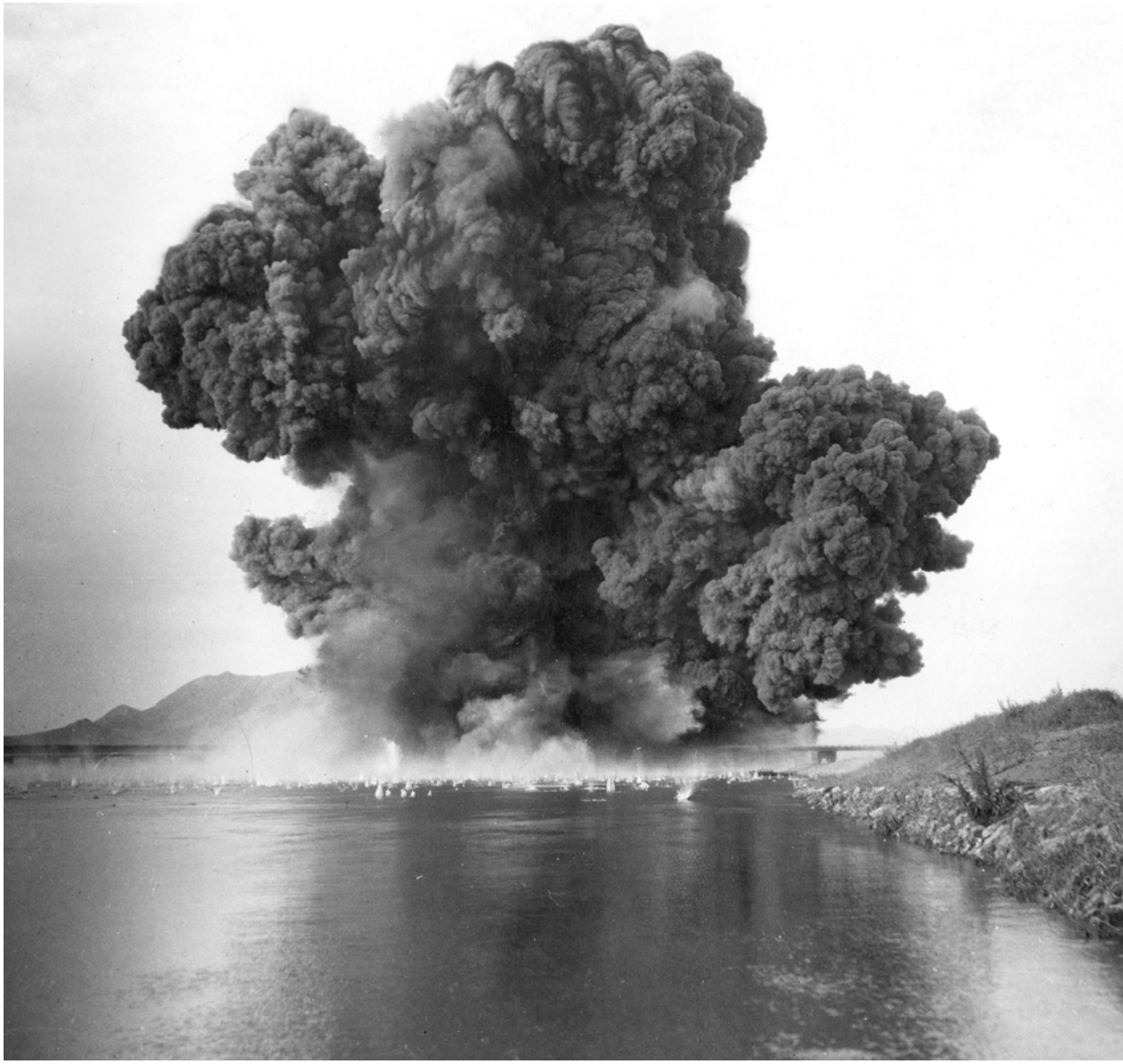
I was there for less than a year. One morning at 0300 the phone rang. The North Koreans had attacked just the day before and Pat Strong was on the phone. He said, "Pete, you've been wanting to get down with a combat unit so you're on your way. You be on a train that leaves the station at 0900 and go to Kyushu. You're going to take over the 3d Engineer Battalion of the 24th Division."

It was the middle of the night. I threw on my fatigue clothes and put everything I had in a footlocker and a suitcase. I grabbed a couple of engineer field manuals. I'd never been with engineer troops so I didn't know what all that stuff was about.

On the train going down, I read those engineer field manuals all the way. I had them pegged from cover to cover, practically, as far as I could go. The battalion was on its way to Korea. By the time I got there one company had already gone over attached to one of the infantry regiments. We got on board the ship about the 4th of July. That was how we celebrated the 4th of July on an LST (landing ship, tank). One of the companies in headquarters went over to Pusan, and I was in Pusan for a couple of days.

When I went over to Pusan, I was about to get on the train to go up to Taejon, along with most of my troops, and who should I run into but Mike [Jon H. Michaelis], coming out of the headquarters building in Pusan. Mike Michaelis and I were together in the Philippines, and we'd been together at Fort Ord. I used to run into him once in a while in Europe, and we were together in G-1 (Personnel Section) back in the War Department. When I went to Yokohama, he was there in the G-3 section. He was about to come over and take command of the 27th Infantry, one of the regiments of another division [25th Infantry Division].

Engineers destroy a bridge over the Han River, 18 July 1950 Engineer School, 71-19-42



We were mostly blowing bridges in those days and planting mines. That was about all we had time to do. One of the company commanders I remember was out in front of our lines blowing a bridge. He had a jeepload of dynamite, and finally a sniper got him....

So, we were somewhat together all the way through Korea as well. I was with the 24th Division, while he later became assistant division commander of the 25th Division.

I got on the train and went up to Taejon, where we were in the midst of a pretty rough battle. Company A was up there with the 21st Infantry working its way back in a retrograde movement, destroying bridges, etc.

I was brand new with this outfit. It was a bunch of guys that for the last few years had been back in garrison in southern Kyushu. They'd been on the roads out in the boondocks and they'd gotten some pretty rough combat and engineering experience. Gee, they were terrific. There wasn't anything that that outfit couldn't do.

When we found out that they were going to Korea they rounded up every piece of engineering equipment that was on the island of Kyushu. Unfortunately, we lost most of it when we got over to Korea because other people stole it from us. They loaded everything in the way of engineering supplies and equipment that they could on these LSTs. We had normal weapons and were pretty good with them

I found that the officers and the men were very innovative. They didn't have much to use. Somehow we managed to get explosives here and there. We begged, borrowed, or stole them from somewhere. I don't know where. I think they took every block of TNT (trinitrotoluene explosive) that was on the island of Kyushu.

We were *the* engineers in Korea for the first month or two, until somebody else finally got over there. Since I didn't know the unit, I spent daylight hours driving in my jeep. I'd get back after dark and find out what was going on in the rest of the division area. I'd lay out the work for the next day, get a few hours sleep, and then take off again.

Intense Fighting at Taejon, 18-20 July 1950

We had a very rough time and we lost an awful lot of men too. This was the worst part of the whole thing. At Taejon, we lost almost all the working element of Company C. They were there with Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, who was captured at Taejon. Some of our guys got out. Sgt. George D. Libby of Company C won the Medal of Honor for defending some wounded men. He was killed in his truck as he was trying to protect these people getting out of Taejon.

In those days we were mostly repairing roads. Korea was virtually roadless. They had a few dirt roads. The main highways were gravel roads. When you got off of those, there were mostly rice-paddy cart tracks and trails over the mountains. We were trying to support the infantry with communications so they could get their supplies and get their stuff out of there as they pulled back. We were mostly blowing bridges in those days

We were still quite understrength, but we got a few replacements and a few Koreans to come in and help us. We seemed to have Koreans with us all the time. I don't know where we got them all but finally we had more Korean army soldiers than we had Americans in our battalion.

and planting mines. That was about all we had time to do. One of the company commanders I remember was out in front of our lines blowing a bridge. He had a jeepload of dynamite, and finally a sniper got him and blew up the jeep. He was a terrific young officer, out of the Class of '45 or '46.

Two other divisions came up and relieved us. [The 25th Division and the 1st Cavalry Division landed in Korea, 10-18 July, and deployed by 22 July to support the battered 24th Division.] We went over on the east coast for a week or two. I reconstituted Company C out of the other companies. They still had their mess and supply people and company headquarters. Capt. Wert, the Company C commander, was killed at Taejon. We worked on the roads along the east coast of Korea in the P'ohang area for the week or two we were there.

In addition to working on roads, most of that time we spent licking our wounds and trying to reconstitute units that had been wiped out. We were still quite understrength, but we got a few replacements and a few Koreans to come in and help us. We seemed to have Koreans with us all the time. I don't know where we got them all but finally we had more Korean army soldiers than we had Americans in our battalion.

I did not lose any of my engineers to the infantry. As a matter of fact, it was the other way around. Engineers were in very short supply. I had a lot of infantry officers assigned to me and I made engineers out of them. Some of them turned out to be pretty good engineers. Of course, we weren't doing any great esoteric engineering feats. We were strictly regular engineers, building roads and demolitions.

Now, we'd been there not more than a week or so when we were pulled back and a division [23d Infantry, 2d Infantry Division] moved in—I think Ch'angnyong rings a bell, south of Taegu. The division had this sector, but the division was chewed up worse than the 3d Engineers were. The 31st Infantry was virtually wiped out at Taejon. The other units had fought hard up north of Taejon.

Two other divisions were over there by that time [1st Cavalry Division and 25th Division]. The engineers were given a 15-mile front along the Naktong River just south of Taegu, which was half of the division sector. The infantry regiments were so decimated that there wasn't any choice but to put us in. It was sort of ironic, in a way. But as I say, we had some infantry officers.

I remember one of these guys from one of the companies; he was crazy. He would swim across the Naktong River in broad daylight hanging onto a log or something and scout out all the enemy positions. Somehow he managed to talk to some of the natives who were hiding underground over there and come back and tell us what was going on.

I sent quite a few patrols. Pretty soon the Koreans never really bothered us at all. We'd get a little sniper fire once in a while and sometimes some artillery, but not very much.

My guys felt really puffed up because we were practically cut off in the rear, but somehow we were managing to hang on. *Seoul City Sue,* the North Korean propagandist, said that the 3d Engineer "Division," the largest and best division that the Americans had, was holding that sector along the Naktong River. Well, she was all we had at 2100. The guys would turn on their radios and listen to what was going on. *Seoul City Sue* was our principal news source.

We didn't lose too many men there, although we lost quite a few out of Company B. When we sent them on a patrol to the north hill they were ambushed and had a hard time getting back. I lost the company commander of Company B in that one. I lost my driver and my radio operator too, because they were there. Some of us managed to get back.

We were so busy up there. The so-called *TASK FORCE HYZER* provided more intelligence on the enemy than anything else. We were renowned all the way back through Eighth Army and the Office, Chief of Engineers, which was a good thing for the 3d Engineers, really.

I can't recall what assets I had on the Naktong now. We had a task force that included the 3d Engineers, augmented with quite a few Koreans. I'm not sure whether I had all my companies or not. I had several other attachments—an antitank platoon, possibly a couple of tanks, and some artillery in support.

In late August we were relieved by a classmate of mine, Skeldon [Lt. Col. James H., 38th Infantry, 2d Division]. I believe he later became a major general. The day after we pulled out and he took over, the North Koreans attacked in force and really gave them hell. Oh, they had an awful time and lost a lot of people. Their intelligence knew we were pulling out and the new operator was coming in. They took advantage of it and attacked the day after we pulled out, so we were lucky.

We were finally brought off to the rear there, pulled out of the line. We didn't go very far. We resupplied and got reorganized for a couple of days. By that time they'd had the landing at Inch'on, so we were getting ready to attack again. The Koreans were afraid of getting cut off, so the pressure on us decreased.

A convoy waits to be ferried across the Kumho-gang River Engineer School, 30-25-6

Lieutenant Johnson describes conditions in Korea during his initial assignment in 1948-49 before the war, his transfer to Hawaii, and his return to combat in the summer of 1950. During the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter he encountered enemy tanks. One was hiding in a building given away by a telltale bulge. Johnson and his squad leader grabbed their bazooka, stuck it through the window of the building, and destroyed the tank at point-blank range. Reporting to the commander of the 21st Infantry Regiment, which was coming up the road and preparing to pass through the 5th Regimental Combat Team, Johnson said, "We've been playing tic-tac-toe with two tanks. We got ours. On the hill are two more, and they're yours."

In the fall of 1948, soldiers of Company B, 13th Engineer Battalion, posed with local children outside of Kapyong Johnson Collection

When I went to Korea in 1948 as a lieutenant, I was assigned to the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. At that time, the 7th Division was in the northern part of South Korea along the 38th Parallel. The 13th Engineers had their battalion headquarters at Camp Sabingo, on the outskirts of Seoul near the Han River. The battalion did a lot of the traditional combat engineering functions, such as maintaining the roads, building outposts up along the 38th, and supporting the infantry battalions that were occupying those positions. We were repairing bridges, building bridges, and so forth. We cleared road slides, put in perimeter fences around infantry battalions, and dug prepared emplacements. We prepositioned explosives to blow a bridge or blow the road.

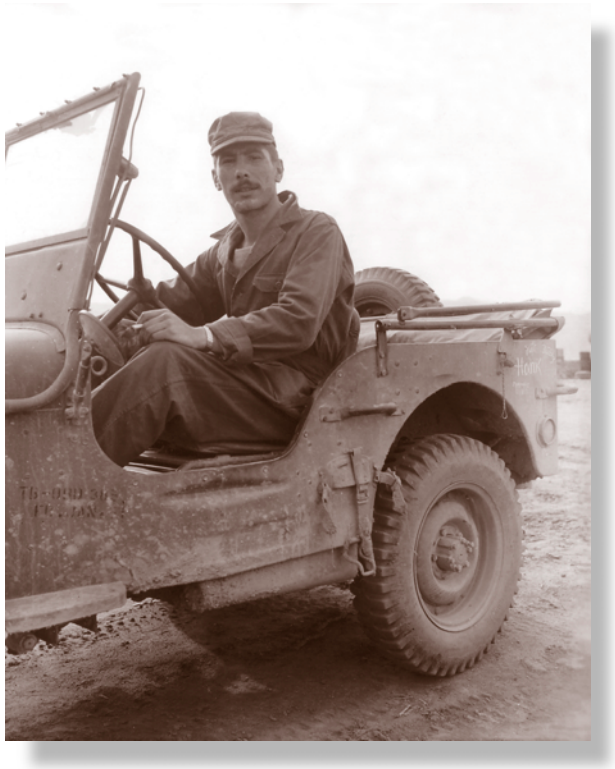
Even in those days, before the Korean War began, it was pretty hairy up on the 38th Parallel. They were getting mortared from the North Koreans in those days. North Koreans came across the line and tried to ambush people.

In October 1948, the 7th Division was pulled out and sent back to Japan. They left an RCT for rear guard protection, the 32d RCT. We stayed in Korea as the 32d RCT until 1 January 1949. Then, the 32d RCT was transferred to Japan on paper, and the elements remaining in Korea were redesignated as the 5th RCT. We were redesignated the 72d Engineer Combat Company. That's how we became the 5th RCT. Finally, the Russians pulled out of North Korea and Harry Truman said we also were to pull out. So, we left in early summer and were transferred to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii.

The War Begins

The Korean War began 25 June 1950 and we were alerted about 1 July. I'd only been married six months. We were loaded aboard ship around the 15th. By that time we had received a lot of fillers from the 442d [RCT, a Hawaiian-based infantry unit].

We landed at Pusan at the end of July. By that time, the UN forces had been driven back almost to the Naktong River. We had our equipment with us. It was the luck of the draw that I was put in charge of the loading. I had to live aboard ship in Honolulu, maybe two or three days before anybody else did. We got off-loaded in Pusan and went into a schoolyard outside of Pusan that we used as a cantonment and marshaling area. I was sent out to look for engineering construction materials such as timber. I came back and found that somebody had scarfed up one of my squads to run ammunition to the 27th [Wolfhound] Regiment, which was then commanded by Lt. Col. Jon H. Michaelis.



Pfc. Walter Graba of the 116th Engineers
RG 111, SC-366520

Running Ammo to the 27th Infantry

The 24th Division by that time had been chewed up pretty badly. They were located generally north and west of Pusan. We were down in the Masan area. When I found out that my squad was taken, I went to the regimental S-3 [Operations and Training Officer], a major by the name of Gordon Owens. I was a 1st lieutenant by this time, and I blew my stack and said, "Who took my squad?" He said, "Well, we needed them to run ammunition up to the 27th." I told him, "Not without me." He said, "I don't want you taking them." I said, "I'm going to take them if it's my people. Nobody is going to take my people." He said, "All right, you have to go see Col. Ordway" [Godwin L., CO, 5th RCT]. When I went to see Col. Ordway I said, "They have taken one of my squads, they have taken my trucks, and I'm going with them." He said, "All right" so we loaded up with ammunition. It took, I think, three ammo trucks and my jeep.

When we got back, I told Col. Ordway, "When the regiment moves, take the high ground. Don't go down those valleys because that's where the ambushes are." We didn't know it at the time but we were running into one hell of a buzz saw.

The trucks and drivers were from other units—the squad and jeep were mine. We ran through about five North Korean roadblocks. We just put down a base of fire and went through and brought the ammo to Col. Michaelis and the 27th.

Michaelis was located north and west of Pusan toward Masan. [Masan is less than 30 miles west-northwest of Pusan harbor]. We were above Masan. The 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry had been up that road before, two days before, and they were wiped out. They got wiped out because they went up piecemeal. They didn't go up as an organized unit. Then they threw the 27th in. The 27th was apparently cut off and couldn't get the ammunition. We took the ammunition up. The truck drivers did not belong to me. On the way back we got into a pretty good firefight. One driver apparently got excited when they started shooting. He pushed the accelerator, lost control of the truck, and the truck rolled down the mountain. I had a number of men killed, plus four or five badly wounded.

I was in the jeep. When I saw what had happened we went back, finally secured the area and got the troops out, but I lost top-notch people. The squad leader was a fellow by the name of Cpl. Torres. He was outstanding. Before he died, he turned to one of the men and said, "Take care of Lieutenant Johnson." To this day that clutches me up. When we got back, I told Col. Ordway, "When the regiment moves, take the high ground. Don't go down those valleys because that's where the ambushes are." We didn't know it at the time but we were running into one hell of a buzz saw.

TASK FORCE KEAN was 7-12 August. Named for the CO, 25th Division, Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, *TASK FORCE KEAN* was the first American counter-attack. The objective was elimination of enemy forces behind the front lines between Masan and the Nam River. We landed in Korea on 31 July. Within the first few hours we went into the staging area by a schoolhouse. We stayed there the first two or three days, since we were offloading our equipment and getting it ready. During that time, we ran the ammo to the 27th. Regimental headquarters was still in the Pusan area in the vicinity of the schoolyard. In fact, I believe Col. Ordway's office was in the school building.

After we ran that ammunition up, the RCT moved onto the front line. This was before *TASK FORCE KEAN*. Things were still very fluid. On our approach march I remember being on the road and getting shelled. The Triple Nickel [555th Field Artillery Battalion] was already in place. Then we got into position. I believe that *TASK FORCE KEAN* was the first organized offensive UN engagement. Up to that time, and I am speaking as a 1st lieutenant, UN forces were being kicked back into the general area of the Naktong perimeter.

There were other meeting engagements, but no organized offensive action. The 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry, had been sent up the same road towards Chinju. They got clobbered—lost a lot. I can't remember if the Naktong ran through Chinju [Chinju, 27 miles due west of Masan, is on the Nam River, which links with the Naktong River to the northeast]. We were told that *TASK FORCE KEAN* was to straighten out the Naktong defensive line. Masan was a pretty good-sized port, so if we could control all of that area, at least the southern flank would be tied in. The 5th Marine Regiment landed after we did, and they came up the road on our left flank. At that time our 1st Battalion was commanded by a Lt. Col. John Jones.

Later, Lt. Col. T.B. Roelofs, a pretty competent guy, took over the battalion. I was the 1st Platoon leader, and as a result I traditionally worked with the 1st Battalion. The 2d Platoon worked with the 2d Battalion and the 3d Platoon with the 3d Battalion. Throckmorton had the 2d Battalion and I think Heckemeyer had the 3d Battalion. I believe Heckemeyer and Throckmorton were classmates at West Point.

So *TASK FORCE KEAN* jumped off. The 1st Battalion was to lead off the attack, and the 2d Battalion was off to the side and a little bit behind.

We were in a line of battalions looking for enemy supplies. My platoon, which was with the 1st Battalion, was up front. We started to find a lot of pre-stocked ammo hidden in peanut fields. The North Koreans had pre-stocked it and when we attacked it became uncovered.

At that time the road was not mined because they didn't know we were coming. We attacked and then we started running into the buzz saw of a number of North Korean units. I guess you could classify it as a meeting engagement in the vicinity of Kogan-ni on the way to Chinju. When I went up north from Kogan-ni in a jeep, I saw two North Korean tanks. I came back maybe 300-400 yards, maybe a kilometer,

An engineer from the 39th Engineer Battalion arms an anti-personnel mine
RG 111, SC-366476

and I ran into one whale of a lot of ammunition hidden in a peanut or soybean field. I blew the ammo in place. I was going up to look for anything I could use as construction material—timbers, and that kind of stuff. We didn't really have much construction material and I thought I could tear down some old buildings, or huts, and get some timber out of them. I came back and reported those tanks to the battalion commander, but nothing was really done about it at that time.

The next day we got clobbered from that direction. They called the place "Bloody Gulch" [soldiers' name for the pass around Sobuk-san]. I believe that the 3d Battalion had already gone through the pass leading to Chinju. We had a hell of a fight back in the valley before the pass over the mountains. I remember the night before I had pulled my platoon off the road in a small area occupied by a 155-mm artillery battery. Practically the entire RCT was jammed in the small valley, all but the 3d Battalion. We had pulled off the road when it was getting dark. I had my jeep and the three squad trucks with pole trailers. I had one pole trailer loaded with a ton of dynamite, and on another pole trailer I had a lot of M-6 anti-tank mines as well as barbed wire, and so on.

I pulled up into the 155-mm battery area behind their guns. By then it was dark. One of the battery officers asked me what we had in the trailers. I said, "dynamite." He wanted me to get out of there right away but we had no place to go. We were in a small valley surrounded by mountains. We went up the valley road and then up the foothills through the pass to Chinju. About 0300 or 0400 we began to receive small arms fire from the hills. The North Koreans were shooting directly at us and were so close the muzzle blasts looked like a bunch of fireflies.

The 1st Battalion of the 35th [Infantry Regiment] was supposed to provide lateral security for the road. By the same token the 24th, which was the black unit, was supposed to have taken the hills, but they didn't. The 35th was actually north of this set of hills and was part of the drive on Chinju. In between us was the 24th, allegedly. That night my jeep was stolen. Four days later we caught a soldier from the 24th with the jeep. The 24th was supposed to be on our right flank and they weren't. They failed to take the high ground and our flank was open.

The next morning about 0400 their attack began. Well, we had rifles and we had 2.36-inch rocket launchers. The first couple of days we were there they sent over a 3.5-inch rocket launcher training team while we were in the schoolyard. The team came over to instruct us on the 3.5. The team leader was a lieutenant by the name of Bob Parr, who had been an upperclassman in my cadet company, the Class of '45. The team came over from the Infantry school. I don't believe that we received any 3.5s then but we needed them. The 2.36s were bouncing off those T-34s like ping-pong balls. I don't remember if we

The soldier on the left holds a 3.5-inch bazooka; the soldier on the right holds the smaller 2.36-inch bazooka it replaced.

had armor with us on *TASK FORCE KEAN*.

Everybody was oriented towards attacking with *TASK FORCE KEAN*. Ordway, the commander, was oriented towards success. He was going to attack. The night before we went into the valley, the regimental CP was at the base of a hill at the entrance to the valley. The hill really commanded the entrance to the valley. I was told to occupy the hill and secure it for the evening because the regimental headquarters was going to be at the foot of the hill. I got up there and had two squads up on top and had the hill secured. After dark, I was ordered to move off the hill and to secure the valley around the CP. That was 2200 or 2300.

Nobody replaced me on the hill. When we got down we were exhausted. My platoon sergeant, Sgt. Parrish, was with me. I had two squads, and I put them out along the rice paddies to cover the trails. I was so tired I told Sgt. Parrish, "I'm going to sleep right on this trail because if anybody comes across they are going to have to trip over me." It was pitch black and, you know, somebody did! A North Korean tripped over me. He was coming down the valley. I think he was just a scout.

The next morning about 0500 I was told to get back up on the hill. We had a hell of a fight getting up on the hill—*hell of a fight.* The reason they were concerned about the hill then was because a classmate of mine, Al Van Petten, who had the 3d Platoon of our company, was supposed to take ammunition further up

We were up front when things began to happen. First, a concussion grenade came flying in. I dropped alongside a rock. Copeland disappeared. The grass in front of me was chopped by machine gun fire. It wasn't ours. I started to back up, but it was being chopped behind me too.

the road to the 3d Battalion. He got ambushed in the little town just outside of that hill and lost a couple of people including a squad leader by the name of Newcomb, who was opened up, as if by can opener, with a burp gun. Al was in his jeep when he saw a grenade coming. He caught it in the air and threw it back, but it didn't quite clear and blew off one of his fingers. About that time Wally Veaudry, another classmate, the assistant regimental S-3, was blown out of a truck going into the valley. Then they started getting concerned about the hill.

I was told to go back up on the hill, but I had to report to Col. Ordway first. I went over and reported. He said, "Go up and take that hill." "Yes, Sir." I brought the two squads up and we got up there about daybreak. I was out front with one of the assistant squad leaders by the name of Copeland, a top-notch guy. We were way up front when things began to happen. First, a concussion grenade came flying in. I dropped down alongside a rock. Copeland had disappeared. Then, the grass in front of me was being chopped by machine gun fire. It wasn't ours. I started to back up, but it was being chopped behind me too. That rock saved me.

I shouted for Copeland, "Where are you?!" He responded. I threw two grenades and started yelling at the platoon to "hose down" the area—you know, start firing. They yelled back that they couldn't see anything. I yelled, "Fire at everything!" They started to hose down the sides of the hill and Copeland jumped up and ran back. He plopped down along side of me. At that moment—it was funny—he had a girlfriend in Hawaii and he was AWOL (absent without leave) before we got on the ship. He wasn't going to come back. He was flat going to stay with his girlfriend, and I finally got word to him that he better damn sure come back. He did and he had told me that his girlfriend was going to be praying for him. When he flopped down along side of me, he looked at me and said, "Lieutenant, you reckon she's praying for me?" Well, we took the hill and got it back. That morning, we moved into the valley.

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Historically, it was a meeting engagement of a large force of North Korean units against *TASK FORCE KEAN*. The 3d Battalion of the 5th RCT got through the pass. The 1st Battalion was holding the right side of the pass. The artillery was down there in the valley along with the 72d Engineers, the 2d Battalion, 5th RCT, and the 155-mm battery. I had my jeep and three trucks on the road. The regimental S-2 [Intelligence Officer], Maj. Aden Renz, pulled his jeep out in front of me and said he had to get the regimental CP set up. I let him out on the road. When I got further up on the road they blew out all of my tires.

That night I was in between the trails of the 155-mm battery, sleeping under my truck, down in the valley in Chindong-ni. It was just about dawn when the attack came. They laid down a base of fire

and the muzzle flashes were like watching fireflies on all the hills around us. The only hill that I guess fire wasn't coming from was the hill on the right side of the pass. That was a cut through the mountain. I remember the valley going around this S curve and then through the pass. The 1st Battalion had that part of the hill.

I lost a classmate by the name of Stan Crosby up there, Company B of the 5th. Company A was up there and they were getting clobbered. They didn't have the whole hill. It was half and half. To the right flank of the hill and down into the valley was all North Korean. We had nobody up there. That was where, I believe, the 24th was supposed to have been. We were getting fire from all of those hills, on the right side and then behind us.

Vehicles were assembling on the road, but they were not moving because of trouble at the pass. About dawn we were starting to move and I pulled all my trucks and my jeep up on the road and out from around the artillery. Then it happened. It was like a curtain went up at a play and the production started. In this instant all hell broke loose. We received fire from all directions.

By that time the North Koreans had gotten into position. When dawn broke they could see what they were shooting at and they really lowered the boom. Of course, we were not just sitting there. I had my radio operator with me. He had the platoon radio, an SCR 300, on his back with a long whip antenna on it. The antenna was easily identified. It seemed that we were getting a lot of the fire. I suspected it was because of the antenna. I told the operator to get that damn radio out of there—it was an aiming stake on us. Then I started shooting off to the left side of the road, which was suddenly heating up. When I saw flares come up from the left side of the road I really started shooting. At that time I was leaning on the jeep and a remarkable thing happened. A guy by the name of Bradley, who was the warrant officer in our company, the maintenance officer, grabbed me and slammed me down on

Naval aviation provided desperately needed close-air support during the early days of the war. Here, ground crewmen check rockets mounted on a Marine F4U Cosair
RG 129, 129-A130426

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the ground. He did so just as a burp gun opened up on me. I literally sat on the bullets and said, "Mind your own business." He started laughing. That broke some of the tension but he obviously saved me.

About that time the flying parson came over, Dean Hess. He was a colonel, a pilot, but also a parson—a preacher. He was in charge of training the South Korean air force, around the Masan area. He was flying an AT-6, the single-wing training aircraft. He flew over us and he saw what was happening. He had some rockets, and I believe he had .50-calibers. He flew in circles around and over the pass. He would let go a rocket and then he'd come back and fire a few rounds on the machine gun. We had a regimental Tactical Air Controller who had gone through the pass with his control jeep. He apparently came back and was operating from the pass areas. He and Col. Hess were both yelling, "Mayday!" for other aircraft to come in. Eventually, some Marine Corps' F4Us [propeller-driven "Corsair" fighter-bombers] came to help.

In the meantime, even though he was low on ammo, he circled and dove in like he was going to strafe. One time he'd strafe, and next time he'd throw something out like his lunch pail. They thought it was a bomb and they'd all duck. Then we got a few more vehicles through the pass. He did that with the thermos bottle, boots, and then he would mix it up with some ammunition. He would fake it and it was really effective. I believe he stayed up there for a half to three-quarters of an hour until the F4Us came in to give us support. Were I to say who helped saved the 5th Infantry, the 5th RCT, I'd give more credit to Dean Hess than anybody. Later he was on "This is Your Life." We finally got through the pass. Remarkably, I believe I was the only one wounded in my platoon during that entire action. It was a superficial wound that hurt my dignity more than anything else. Luckily, it caught me in the leg and just went through flesh, no bones.

The operation apparently got called back. The 3d Battalion was ordered back but they were almost into Chinju. We came back by a circular route. A few got through going back the way we came, and that was by necessity. Wayne Hauck, one of my classmates, an artilleryman, had been shot through the throat. Another artillery classmate, Bob Koch, who later became a brigadier in the Army, grabbed him, pulled him under a concrete bridge, and sat there with his thumb on his jugular vein for about four hours. Then they threw him on one of the 155-mm battery's half-track prime movers. To my knowledge, that was the only vehicle that got out going the other way. That action saved his life. They pulled Wayne out, and I believe treated him on the hospital ship *Hope,* which was in the Masan harbor. They then quickly air-evacuated him to Tripler in Hawaii. Very few of us came out the way we went in.

Once we got through the pass things calmed

down and we moved back into roughly the original position around Mt. Sobuk-san. We then were assigned to that position and it stabilized the line. The reason the position was taken was because Sobuk-san is the dominant feature of the terrain around Kogan-ni, off to the southeast of Pongam-ni. We stayed there until we moved to the Waegwan area in late August.

I was up around Sobuk-san doing what an engineer platoon leader does, taking mines up on the mountain, putting in mines between little draws, and sometimes physically taking an infantry position with my platoon. We became pretty original in our fighting. We even took headlights from a destroyed truck, put them on a rod, and tied ropes to them so that we could move the headlights around. We hooked them to a battery in a foxhole. When we'd hear something, we'd turn the lights on. The North Koreans didn't know what was going on. How did we get a vehicle on top of the mountain? There was also a destroyer down in the harbor that fired star shells for us and gave us artillery support.

Most of the attacks were *banzai*-type at night. I remember one attack on Company A under Henry Emerson, another classmate. One morning after a *banzai* attack they found forty North Korean bodies in front of one platoon. They just kept coming, but we held Sobuk-san. It had not been occupied when we got up there. Company A was on the left side, Company B

The remains of North Korean troops killed near Waegwan, September 1950 RG 111, SC-349306

was right on top of Sobuk-san, and Company C was off to the right down the draw. What I tried to do was to tie the companies together by cutting a road with a bulldozer up almost to Company C on the reverse slope of the hill. In a small valley to the left of Company A was the 3d Battalion.

Hank Emerson of Company A asked that we place anti-personnel mines on the ridgeline covering his front. He occupied the top of a steep hill above the battalion headquarters. Between his position and Company B was a saddle over which the North Koreans could infiltrate. We carried the mines up the steep hill and started putting the mines in. I thought our action

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had been coordinated with everyone. Since we were in front of Company A, Company C across the valley could see us. They thought the North Koreans were out in front of Company A, so they called in artillery.

I went back to Hank and said, "You guys are shooting at me." He said, "No, that's not us." I said, "It's coming from back here; it's not coming from out there. You get that squared away and I'll go down and put mines in behind your flank," because he had been attacked from there too (between his position and the 3d Battalion). So we went down there, and we were putting in mines and trip flares. Apparently, people from the 3d Battalion saw us and they started opening up on us with their .50-calibers. I went back to Hank and said, "When you get this straightened out, I'll be back." It was funny, since, again, we were fortunate that nobody was hit. It was just lack of coordination.

Second Lt. John Kane, 65th Engineer Battalion, removes a Chinese box mine
RG 111, SC-357543

We were continuously getting hit by the North Koreans and really had no good maps of the area for artillery adjustment. Col. Throckmorton told me to get on top and sketch the terrain in front of Company B. I went up Sobuk-san, the highest peak in the area, and tried to sketch the terrain out front for artillery fire missions. It was reproduced for defensive artillery fire missions and general control.

Col. Ordway was relieved because of Bloody Gulch. He was a heck of a nice guy. He went on and became an IG (inspector general). Col. John L. Throckmorton became the regimental commander.

Things were really touch-and-go in the fighting. We really had no reserves. Many nights I sat in the CP with Col. Throckmorton waiting to be committed as the "regimental reserve" with my platoon. The other engineer platoons also were used as the regimental reserve. John L. Throckmorton was really super. I could never say enough good about him. He would shake his head when things looked really bad and say, "I don't want to use you. I don't want to commit you." Of course,

I was on his team and I didn't want to be committed either. Nothing was worse than going out in the dark not knowing where you were going and not being able to reconnoiter. He never panicked. It was really an interesting study for me to watch that lieutenant colonel operate.

We were under attack every night and we were *banzaied.* There would be a lot of North Korean bodies on this slope in front of us. We weren't being ignored down there. Whether or not we were being pushed or punished as much as the 35th or 24th, I don't know.

David Carlisle [a colleague of 1st Lt. Charles Bussey] has written a lot about the 24th. He was one of my cadets when I was a first classman. Carlisle was a smart guy—became an engineer. There were two black cadets who came in with the Class of '50—David Carlisle and the other was Green. My company, the 6th New Cadet Company, was the company that got both of them. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell from New York kept tabs on how they were treated and how they did. He used to come up twice a month to see if they were getting hazed or being treated any differently. They weren't. I knew Carlisle and Green as well as an upperclassman could know two plebes. Carlisle became an engineer and was assigned to Ft. Belvoir [Virginia] when I ran an OCS (officer candidate school) company. I used to see him frequently at Belvoir, but I don't know whatever happened to him. [David Carlisle became instrumental in seeking a reappraisal of the 24th Infantry's performance in Korea. One of the 25 Division's three regiments, the segregated 24th Infantry, was rumored, fairly or unfairly, to have "bugged out" in the face of the enemy. In late September 1950, the division commander, Maj. Gen. William B. Dean, requested that Eighth Army disband the regiment as unreliable. The controversy had one salutary effect—it forced the Army to reexamine the overall policy of using segregated units. For more on the 24th Infantry's performance in Korea

Two soldiers remove a North Korean anti-tank mine from a riverbank, 21 September 1950
Engineer School, 119-12-2

The 3d Engineers manned the assault boats across the river at night....My boat hit what we thought was the opposite shore. We all piled out and ran inland only to find ourselves back in the water. In the darkness they had dropped us on an island in the middle of the river.

and on the segregated army in Korea, see the U.S. Army Center of Military History's *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (1996); and Charles Bussey's *Firefight at Yechon: Courage and Racism in the Korean War* (1991).]

My recollection is that the 24th did break. That's my recollection. I know that Col. Throckmorton was concerned that his right flank was not stable. He moved units around to try to absorb anything that might happen. We were in the Sobuk-san area about a month and then we got pulled out. Who backfilled us, I don't know [the 27th Infantry Regiment]. Then we moved up to the Naktong to Taegu and attacked north to Waegwan. We were attached to the 24th. We crossed the Naktong just south of two bridges, which had been destroyed.

Breakout Across the Naktong

I had a bet with our first sergeant, Sgt. Loeffler, who was the 1st sergeant of the 72d. Sgt. Loeffler kept asking me, "What the hell is going to happen?" I said, "Well, we're going to break out and attack the north." He said, "How?" And I said, "We have got to cross the Naktong." He said, "When?" I said, "Well, we will cross the Naktong when MacArthur attacks Inch'on." We weren't getting our replacements either because they were being scarfed off someplace. I told him, "We're going to have an amphibious landing probably at Inch'on." He said, "When?" And I said, "The 15th of September." It obviously was a wild guess, but I was serious. He said, "I betcha." I said, "What do you mean you bet me?" He said, "I'll bet you 10 bucks." I said, "I don't have 10 bucks to bet." He said, "I bet you a dollar." And I said, "All right, I'll bet you a dollar." He paid me a dollar on the 16th.

On the 15th we attacked across the Naktong [the 5th RCT was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, 14 Sep 50]. A classmate, Kenny Hatch, led the 72d's 2d Platoon, and I had the 1st Platoon. The 24th Division had attacked during the day, and they must have lost a lot of their people in the river assault process. We attacked at night. We crossed by the Waegwan Bridge that had been blown. [The 1st Cavalry Division had destroyed the permanent bridge at Waegwan in August and the North Koreans had not repaired it].

The 3d Engineers manned the assault boats across the river at night. I was in the first boat with part of a squad and the rest of the platoon followed. We were going to get on the other side to clear some mines. My boat hit what we thought was the opposite shore. We all piled out and ran inland only to find ourselves back in the water. In the darkness they had dropped us on an island in the middle of the river. I yelled for the boats to come back and get us across. Well, we finally got across.

Finally, my two squads were across plus the platoon sergeant. We ran into mines on the road. Clearing mines with a mine detector at night is tedious and time consuming. I mean, hell, we would have been doing it

Soldiers from the 65th Engineers repair a bypass on the road to Chonju, 27 September 1950
Engineer School, 93-56-1

yet if I had to do it that way. So what we did, we'd find a mine and then just throw it off the side of the road. They were wooden box mines. Finally, we got up to the hill through which the road had been cut. At the hill the road turned 90 degrees—perpendicular to the river. By now the night was pitch black.

The infantry was attacking on both sides of the road and had secured the hill. Fighting continued, primarily on the left side of the road. On the right side there was just a little "chocolate drop" kind of hill. The road was cutting through the ridgeline, almost parallel to the river, until the hill, then it took off north away from the river. Kenny Hatch, who had the Second Platoon, 72d, was now up with me. It was night, 2200 or 2300. We were getting ready to look for more mines or do what we could as engineers when all hell broke loose.

There were two North Korean T-34 tanks down on the other side of the hill. They had come up the road apparently not knowing we had crossed the river. We heard their engines and tracks clanking. One of the squads from Company A led by a Sgt. Lyon went down with a 2.36-inch bazooka. They stopped the tanks but they didn't knock them out. I believe they scared them and probably knocked the tracks off of one because after they bounced some rounds off our hill, it sounded like one tank was pulling the other back up the road. We couldn't see anything because it was so dark. Anyhow, Sgt. Lyon came charging back on our side of the cut. He said he got within 20 feet of the first tank and said he knew he blew the tread off it. Those two rounds were all the bazooka ammo that we had with us. None of our vehicles were on our side of the river as yet.

At the same time, up on the hills on the left side of the road, there was a hell of a firefight. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where anybody was. Ken Hatch and I both had a squad or two with us, but when the firefight took place we didn't know where anyone was. We started digging in on the reverse slope of the chocolate drop hill. Unknown to us at the time one of the lieutenants from the Class of '49, John Hayes, caught

Members of the 3d Engineer Battalion ferrying a jeep across the Naktong River
Engineer School, 30-25-100

a concussion grenade right in the face and it blinded him. John and I had been together at Lafayette College. The fight went on all night long. By the next morning things had quieted down and we (the 5th) resumed the movement up the road toward Kumch'on, South Korea. During the night, the 3d Engineers had emplaced a ferry near the blown bridges and our vehicles started coming over. My jeep and trailer arrived early that morning.

I had some tools on the jeep trailer, a pioneer set, another mine detector. Col. Roelofs, the battalion commander, came back and said, "We ran into more mines. Get up front." I said, "Yes, Sir" and went up front. The Koreans had buried the wooden box mines, maybe a hundred of them, right on the road. Under those circumstances, the mine detector wasn't necessary since we could easily see where the mines had been buried. Removing them was a different problem. You are supposed to dig around the things, carefully remove the dirt, check for booby traps, remove the fuse, and so on. Another technique is to put a rope on the mine, get off to the side, and pull it out with the rope. I did all of that for the first one, but it took so long that I just cleared the dirt off the tops, opened the pressure plate, took the fuse out, and threw the mine off to the side of the road. I mean, in those days *we had to move.* We didn't have time for all that. I simply didn't believe that the enemy had enough time to booby trap each mine so I just threw them off the road. Obviously, it worked.

We got up to a blown concrete bridge-culvert. We didn't have any dozers over yet but we had to build a bypass around the bridge. I guess the bridge had been hit by air. We did build the bypass using picks and "D" handled shovels—hand labor.

The 24th was driving into Kumch'on. The 5th was leading the attack [9-14 Oct 50] for the 24th Division. About that time they started the system where one RCT would attack all day.

Then another RCT from the division would pass through and attack. If all went well, that meant we would fight one day and rest two. The 21st Infantry was to leapfrog us and attack the next day. I ran into some more mines, so Col. Roelofs said, "Well, get rid of these mines and rejoin the battalion." When we got up to a small town between Waegwan and Kumch'on, the road went straight through the town and another road went off of it perpendicular to the right. I didn't know where the damn regiment went. There was no trace of the 5th. What happened is that the 5th went into the town, took the road to the right, and let the 21st bypass or attack through. I got up to the town with one squad and my jeep and didn't see anybody.

When I turned around and looked down the road behind me I saw the 21st coming up the road. The road went right through rice paddies. The road was built up, of course, by fill through the paddies. The 21st was marching in a column of twos. They had a

At the same time, up on the hills on the left side of the road, there was a hell of a firefight. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where anybody was.

few vehicles, not many, because the ferry still wasn't operating effectively. Anyhow, I was standing at the road junction in this little village talking to the squad leader when the building we were standing by exploded. A tank, T-34, came out and turned, facing its gun down the road toward the 21st. We were so close to it the North Koreans didn't see us. It let a couple of rounds go at the infantry. Most of those villages had walls right up to the road, and there was a six-foot wall right there at the corner. I jumped over that wall and didn't touch it—cleared that thing like you wouldn't believe! My squad leader ran through the hole that the tank made coming out. We met on the other side.

An American convoy passes a disabled North Korean T-34 tank near the Naktong River
RG 111, SC-355124

The jeep had been parked on the side road close to the wall but the jeep trailer was hanging out in the roadway exposed to the direct line of the tank. The squad leader and I were pulling, trying to get the trailer out of the way so the tank couldn't see it. In the meantime, we got under the trailer tarp and tried to get the rocket launcher out. I looked down that road, which had just been loaded with 21st infantrymen. When the tank fired that first round, or the second, there wasn't a soldier to be seen. I don't know what swallowed them up, but that whole line of infantry was gone. They were down.

I wanted to climb on top of the tank and drop something down the turret. Instead, the tank backed up just as fast as it could go to the next little bridge. It had to turn to go down a bypass and was going so fast it flipped over on its top. I never saw this happen before but the tank crew scrambled out of an escape hatch on the bottom of the tank and took off.

A short distance up the road there was a little schoolhouse. The building had a bulge. It was another tank, which had been driven into the building. So we stuck the 2.36-inch through the window and blew it.

The 5th went up to the town and turned right for the 21st to pass through. I looked up on the side of the hills outside the town and saw two more T-34s.

I figured it wasn't prudent to go looking for the 5th under those conditions, so I took the squad and the jeep back down to the 21st. I met the regimental commander, who was coming up. He asked, "What the hell is going on up there?" I said, "Sir, I don't know what happened to the 5th. I think they went up there and turned to the right, but I don't know. We had just been playing tic-tac-toe with two tanks. We got ours. On the hill are two more, and they are yours." I can talk about these things because they're funny now.

He wasn't happy because he claimed the 5th had left him with a bag of worms that he had to overcome at the point of the leapfrog or pass-through. I went back closer to the ferry site where I met the rest of my platoon. I had the platoon bed down since we'd been going for three days—no sleep, little food. I decided to go back to the company CP, which was on the Waegwan side of the river, to get food, ammo, and mail. So I went back over on the ferry with my jeep and met the company commander. I told him that I wanted food, ammo, and I wanted the mail.

Well, I got food. I think they were 10-in-1 rations, which I had never seen before. We only had C rations. Anyhow, I got those and the mail and I went back up to the ferry site. It was now dark. While we were in line waiting at the ferry site to get across, I fell asleep sitting in the front seat waiting for the ferry to pick us up. The next thing I knew my jeep driver, Cpl. Wilkins, was in the ditch and pulling on me. "Lieutenant, get in the ditch!" I said, "What for?" He yelled, "We're getting shelled!" There was an 88-mm or something across the river that was firing at the ferry site. The rounds were missing the jeep by only a couple of feet and exploding against the riverbank. I was so damn tired. In war you get so tired you don't care. I said, "Okay." He later told me that I took my poncho, put it over my head, and fell back asleep.

We got back over the river and the next day we leapfrogged the 21st. They had taken out those two tanks. We were now, I think, getting close to Kumch'on, South Korea. They returned the favor and left us a bunch of tanks as we leapfrogged them.

I found the 5th the next day. They had been out to the right as I had thought. They hadn't left signs, not even tracks on the road, because there were no vehicles at that time.

After Inch'on the whole enemy front collapsed, about 17 September. The 5th attacked, leapfrogging the 21st. I was still an engineer and the 1st Platoon leader. My three trucks and my jeep were across the river, and we were going toward Kumch'on. I was in a riverbed just before we went up over a rise on the road going towards Kumch'on. Col. Roelofs came back in the riverbed where the temporary battalion CP was. He said they had run into more mines and I had to go up and get them. By that time we now had tanks

The rounds were missing the jeep by only a couple of feet and exploding against the riverbank. I was so damn tired. In war you get so tired you don't care. I said, "Okay." He later told me that I took my poncho, put it over my head, and fell back asleep.

from the 72d Tank Company, 5th RCT, and two of them were up on the road.

My jeep driver, Wilkins, and I got the jeep up on the road. We were lined up with one tank, an M4A3, I believe, then my jeep, one more tank, two of my trucks, two more tanks, and my last truck. We were the lead element of the attack. When we ran into the mines, I got out in front of the tanks to start clearing them. A platoon sergeant from Company B of the 5th, Sgt. Suga, plus a few of his troops were with me. I found the mines, picked them up and threw them off to the side of the road, and we continued the attack. It started getting dark, but we continued going up the road with our small group in front.

Soldiers sweeping the road for mines before an advancing M-4 tank
Engineer School, 119-13-1

All of a sudden a North Korean machine-gun just off on the left side of the road opened up. I jumped off the right side of the road and part way down the road embankment. The road was built on fill through the rice paddies. Suga jumped off to the left side of the road and within seconds he came jumping back to our side. When he leaped off, he landed right on the enemy machine-gun—we were that close. I threw a grenade and about that time the tank behind me, the lead tank, opened up and sprayed our side of the road. One of Suga's soldiers had his head laid up against my thigh. When that tank let go it blew that poor boy's head off and Suga also got wounded, not badly, from our tank. The bullet just grazed my right leg enough to sting, but I got so damn mad that I stood up and went back to the tank. I got the outside telephone and said, "You son-of-a-bitch, if you fire one more round on that side of the road, I will personally blow you to kingdom come!" When the firefight started, our own tank was buttoned up and reacted by firing to the front.

Well, things calmed down. The machine gun was eliminated and it must have been the only thing there. I was wounded in the right leg but was able to walk, fortunately. Later that night the Company B commander, Kermit Young, was badly wounded and evacuated. Shortly afterward it became daylight and I pulled my platoon off to the side. The 5th continued attacking, and they ran into a hell of a firefight from the hill

They [the North Koreans] weren't that anxious to surrender. They were primarily trying to get north. I suspect, though, that if we had really put a block out there, they would have come in rather than be killed. Things that they could see, such as napalm, flamethrowers, and so on, would cause them to stop, but they didn't seem to fear rifle fire.

Wounded North Korean prisoners captured during the drive north to the Naktong River, 18 September 1950
RG 111, SC-361779

line to the left of the road. To my knowledge it was the first time we ran into grazing fire. The North Koreans were not on the ridgelines. They were on the lower slopes so that they weren't getting plunging fire but instead grazing fire. It was pretty effective machine gun fire, and they hit Kermit Young plus a couple more officers in the company.

Becoming an Infantry Company Commander

Later, I got a call from Col. Throckmorton. His call sign was Danger Six. My call sign was Dynamite One, which is a good call sign. He said, "Dynamite One, this is Danger Six. I want you to assume command of the unit you have been supporting," which was Company B. That was how I became an infantry company commander. I then became an infantryman. I had been wounded twice up to that point. It seems that we had been working all day and fighting most nights. We were exhausted. When I became an infantryman, I could sleep all day long and then fight at night.

That night the regiment had been trying to take this hill, trying to go up toward Kumch'on. It was a tough fight. I told Col. Roelofs I wanted to take it my way. I wanted to envelop it because I suspected there was nothing really off the road on the enemy flank. I thought it was all concentrated on the road leading to Kumch'on. He said, "All right. Go ahead." I told him how I was going to do it and that I'd keep him informed of my position. I took the company and we went all the way around to where they were. We used the reverse slopes so they couldn't see us from the road. I had the whole company lined up on the reverse slope of the ridgeline behind them.

After we got the company on line I called for both artillery and the 4.2-inch mortars on two target areas. I knew where the North Koreans were, even though I couldn't see them, since I could tell where the fire was coming from. I had the Triple Nickel fire for effect on the left area and the 4.2-inch mortars at the right area; then, I switched the two, so we really saturated the target area. We lifted the artillery and went over

An artillery crew awaits the signal to fire on the enemy, 25 July, 1950
RG 111, SC-344383

the top. One of the 72d's tank platoon leaders, Keith Whitham, who had been an usher at my wedding, was in the valley below and saw us come over the top. He thought we were North Koreans and let fly at us with their 76-mm tank cannon. When those rounds hit we all jumped back on the reverse slope and I radioed a flash message: "FLASH, FLASH, I am receiving high-velocity fire, and I believe it's from our tanks."

Col. Roelofs, fortunately, was down by the tanks. He ran up and yelled at Whitham, "Goddamnit, you're firing at Johnson and Company B!" Keith apparently said, "He looks like a North Korean to me."

The next day, the enemy opposition just evaporated and they began retreating north. I really don't know why. We just didn't have the people to pick them up, so we bypassed them. Our battalion was ordered to move east of where we were and put in blocking positions in a valley, which ran north/south. The companies were separated by considerable distance, about 10 miles to the next unit. The 555th did provide general support to each of us. Our job was to just keep the North Koreans going north. If they came in we would pick them up.

I put the company out in defensive positions occupying high ground to the approach routes coming up the valley. As I said, we had field artillery support, and we had our own 60-mm mortars. We fired mortar flares, but the round would work maybe one-tenth of the time. We sat on the hills and watched long columns of North Koreans moving north on the other side of the valley. They were obviously going back home. Every once and a while some would walk into us.

A few surrendered. I vividly remember one who did. He had been badly wounded. I believe he had been hit by white phosphorus or napalm. The back of his head was almost gone and maggots were growing in his wound. I had put roadblocks out on the approach routes and one of those called me when that guy came in. I went down there and saw him. My people were wondering what we should do with him. I said, "Put him on a jeep and take him to an aid station." They said, "Lieutenant, we're going to blow his brains out." They felt that he was in that bad of a condition. Whether or not he survived, I don't know, but we took him to an aid station. A few of their wounded did come in, plus stragglers in threes and fours, but the masses were moving in the foothills on the other side of the valley.

They weren't that anxious to surrender. They were primarily trying to get north. I suspect, though, that if we had really put a block out there, they would have come in rather than be killed. Things that they could see, such as napalm, flamethrowers, and so on, would cause them to stop, but they didn't seem to fear rifle fire. They couldn't see the bullets. I must admit that the first couple of months I didn't think I'd get hit either. It's the survival attitude, just the philosophy

I had been wounded twice up to that point. It seems that we had been working all day and fighting most nights. We were exhausted. When I became an infantryman, I could sleep all day long and then fight at night.

you have to have. Training does that for you.

The situation changed so fast. What those tanks were doing down there was getting ready to go on the attack, to cross the Naktong and to go into Pusan and to take South Korea. All of a sudden things reversed. The North Korean tanks were surprised and were caught. They really couldn't move much off the roads because of the extensive rice paddies.

When we were going toward Waegwan we had real problems keeping the roads through the paddies open. We simply couldn't get the fill material to fill the failed spots in the road. I blew a great big tall brick chimney to get the bricks out of it to use as fill. In that case it was the only thing we had that could get us across the doggone rice paddies. Col. Emerson Itschner was brought into my CP by Capt. Gayhart. He was coming in as the new IX Corps Engineer. He said he'd like to go up to see the bridge at Waegwan. At that time it was in the 1st Cavalry area.

I said, "Well, Sir, you know that the road on this side parallels the river and it's pretty hairy. It runs down by the river for about three kilometers." "Oh?" he said, "I want to go see it." I said, "All right." So he got in the front seat of the jeep, I got in the back, and Wilkins drove us. I said, "Now Wilkins, when you get over this rise, floor it." Itschner said, "Why?" I said, "Because we're going to get shot at going along the river." He said, "You think so?" I said, "Yes, Sir. I made that trip many times, and they always fire their 88s from across the river." We really flew up that road. Sure as hell, those high-velocity guns were tracking us trying to get us. Col. Itschner never forgot that.

When I was a TAC (tactical) officer at West Point, Col. Itschner came up just to talk to the cadets who were graduating and being commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. He was Chief of Civil Works or something. Since I was the only engineer tactical officer, I was included in the reception at Round Pound. I went over to him and said, "You remember the ride we had on the road going to Waegwan?" He smiled and said he certainly did.

A combat engineer is part infantry and part engineer. The interrelationship of combat engineering and civil engineering is inseparable. I contend the best engineer has to be the guy out in front for one reason. Whatever he does or fails to do, engineers who come behind him have to either correct the deficiencies or build on what was done. That guy has got to have a damn good foundation to know what is good, what is smart, and what is dumb. I've seen that so many times. People do things in combat engineering on the spur of the moment that are stupid. Other people come along and they build, and build, and build on those stupid things. Pretty soon the whole thing has got to be torn down. That's why I say that the Army must have the best combat engineers possible. You get them by pro-

A combat engineer is part infantry and part engineer. The interrelationship of combat engineering and civil engineering is inseparable.

viding good engineering training and experience in peacetime as well as providing tactical training.

I had just become an infantry company commander, Company B, 5th Infantry, as we broke out of the Pusan Perimeter, crossed the Naktong River, and liberated the town of Kumch'on in South Korea. Other elements of the 24th division were liberating nearby towns, as I recall. We were leapfrogging. The regiment would fight one day, consolidate what we had, and then pull off to the flank. The next regiment, the 21st, would take over and fight a day. The third member of the three units of the 24th Division was the 27th British Brigade. The British brigade would then attack for a day while the 21st pulled off the side and rested. On the fourth day, the 5th would come back and attack. We were relaxing for two days and fighting for one.

Everything as far as the North Koreans were concerned was going to hell-in-a-handbasket. They were disintegrating. We took Kumch'on, South Korea, and the next day we did nothing. About the third day there appeared to be nothing in front of us. That was when our battalion was sent to the north and east of Kumch'on and we were put in blocking positions. Our orders were to block them from getting onto the roads. If they did, they could have set up and ambushed some friendly force coming up the road. But they were staying in the mountains and walking up the trails. I guess they were abandoning an awful lot of the equipment. We did pick up a few prisoners and some of their wounded, who we put on a truck to take to an aid station or POW (prisoner of war) compound. That went on for three or four days and then we moved. We didn't really get into combat for quite a while after that because of this leapfrog philosophy and the fact that the front had just disintegrated. We moved north and took an assembly area north of Seoul up by Kaesong, south of the 38th Parallel. We initially walked, but then we got on a motor convoy through Seoul to near Kaesong.

Rice paddies outside of a small Korean village
RG 111, SC-344537

Brigadier General Davidson describes the interview he had with General MacArthur upon Davidson's arrival in Japan, his assignment to build a defensive line around the Pusan Perimeter, and his subsequent assignment to the 24th Infantry Division.

When the North Koreans attacked south on 25 June 1950 I was chief of staff to [Lt. Gen. Albert] Al C. Wedemeyer [Sixth Army commander at The Presidio, California]. My wife's a Catholic and I'm a Protestant. She had gone to church—early church—and the rest of us were sitting around the pool. On the way back her job was to bring back the Sunday paper. When we opened the paper, we read the account of the invasion. Little did I realize that six weeks later I was going to be over there too.

A South Korean soldier looks over the railroad yards in Pusan RG 111, SC-349449

We followed the course of the conflict. Col. Anderson, my exec then, and I would walk from the engineer office up the hill to The Presidio to our quarters. We'd walk up the hill together and discuss the war. As the North Koreans advanced so rapidly, the obvious thing seemed to us was to have some sort of amphibious landing behind the North Korean lines. We wondered whether or not that type of action would be taken. Of course, we didn't discuss as far north as Inch'on, but that seemed to us the logical thing to do because they'd gotten such a jump on us.

The 2d Division was going over there early from Seattle and we had to POM them. The major occupation for me, as chief of staff, was to be sure that everything was done properly and that we got all the supplies and equipment to them so that they could load and get going. I didn't realize then that I was going to beat them over there.

I first found out I was going about 10 days or two weeks before I left. I left either the very end of July or the very first of August and arrived over there about 4 August. General Douglas MacArthur had a policy that every general officer who was on his way to Korea would report to him before going to Korea. I landed at the airport in Tokyo, was taken down to Yokohama, and put in a hotel. I was told that General MacArthur was away and wouldn't be back for a few days. I was to wait there on call and report to him when he arrived and could see me. So I spent two or three days down there.

Finally, his headquarters staff called me and I reported to him. In his usual way he was very friendly. He had a great capacity, when he saw an individual, for

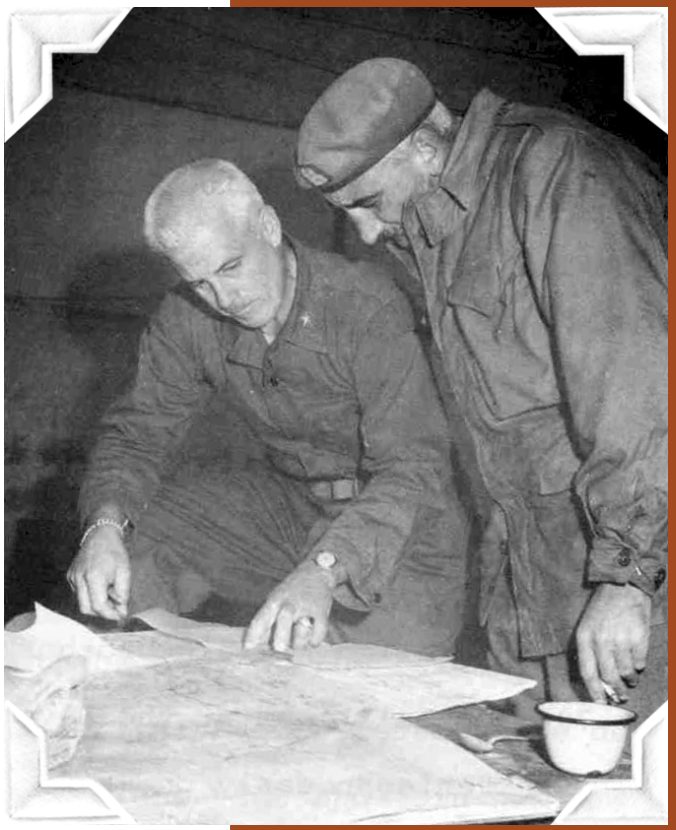
making him think that he was the one person he wanted to see at that time. He had a very fine, friendly ability in that regard. He greeted me, and, of course, every private conversation turned, in a reasonable degree, to Army football [Brig. Gen. Davidson had been head football coach at the U.S. Military Academy, 1933-38]. Then he said he didn't know what job Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker had lined up for me. I was assigned to Gen. Walker's headquarters and he made the assignments from there. MacArthur outlined the situation in very general terms, wished me luck, and that was it. I guess I was there about 10 or 15 minutes. He was the same friendly person he had been when I reported to him as a lieutenant, and he exhibited the same degree of friendliness when I reported to him as a brigadier general.

I went over as a brigadier general. I never lost my rank after I first got it in Sicily. I went over there as an infantryman. Gen. Walker said, "I want you to lay out a defensive line around Pusan in the event we have to evacuate the peninsula." I made my reconnaissance first despite the time lag of getting the supplies over, because I hadn't seen Korea before—hadn't seen that terrain.

First, I made a map of reconnaissance to see what the problem was. That may have taken a day or so. Then I got a hold of a jeep and went over as much of the ground as I could. I don't think I got an airplane then because, as I remember, there weren't any. It really was with a map reconnaissance and a limited vehicle ground reconnaissance that I got my feel for the terrain and laid out what I thought was a proper trace for a defensive line. As I went over the terrain I looked at it and one thing that impressed me greatly, in the line where I felt the positions should go, was the shallowness of the soil, and the rock. To dig placements through that rock, in the time and the number we had to, was almost impossible. The only recourse, as I saw it, was to build up instead of going down—new sandbags. I remember the first supply list I put in. I asked for an ungodly number of sandbags. When they were unloaded on the dock there were a mountain of them. They called that "Davidson's Folly," at least some wags did, but they didn't last too long.

I was told to make this reconnaissance as fast as I could, three or four days. Then I had to come back and report to Gen. Walker's chief of staff—Lev Allen [Maj. Gen. Leven C.]. He seemed to think it was a pretty good idea. He said he would present it to Gen. Walker at his first opportunity, which he did later that

Gen. Walker said, "I want you to lay out a defensive line around Pusan in the event we have to evacuate the peninsula."



Brig. Gen. Davidson discusses the military situation with a British officer
Davidson Collection

I started to work that Sunday when I got there. I don't think I ever felt lower in my life because they had absolutely nothing to work with....There was nothing in the way of supplies.... There were no troops or civilian organizations....It looked like an unplayable lie. I was really low.

night. Gen. Walker said, "No, it's got to go on this line," which was the line that General MacArthur had drawn with his finger across the map.

I thought it was unsound. In the first place I thought it was too long. The kind of perimeter we wanted had to be defended with a force of steadily diminishing size, you see, and a line that was so long would be difficult to defend with all the troops we had then. It would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to defend as the force became smaller. I still thought my line was sound but, of course, I was in no position to say no.

I was instructed to go down to Pusan and to construct this line along the trace that General MacArthur had picked out from an airplane on one of his visits. I don't think he made a detailed reconnaissance or a map study, certainly not to the degree that I had, although mine only took place over 72 hours.

He sent me back to Pusan, and I flew down in an L-4 with the base section. They gave me a little room. I started to work that Sunday when I got there. I don't think I ever felt lower in my life because they had absolutely nothing to work with. I was all by myself and doing all the planning and so on. There was nothing in the way of supplies to speak of. It was going to take time to get the supplies. There were no troops or civilian organizations to work with, to do the job. It looked like an unplayable lie. I was really low. Anyway, I laid out the defensive line and figured out the sectors and the amount of supplies for each sector. Then I added them all up, made my supply list, and sent it over to Japan. The big items were those damn sandbags. [The *DAVIDSON LINE* began at Sodong-ni, approximately eight miles north of Ulsan and extended to northeast of Miryang. It then curved southeast of Muan-ni, crossed the Naktong, and ended at Masan.]

I started what I could with whatever personnel I could dig up, which was pretty much of a ragtag and didn't amount to anything. I hardly got started. I was just lucky as hell that they never even had to go back there because they wouldn't have found the damn thing. What little was done wasn't worth a damn anyway, so that petered out.

We were able to hold the Naktong perimeter when that developed. The 24th Division was the first division over there and they were pretty decimated. Bill Dean, the commanding general, had been captured; the deputy commander had gone home again because of stomach trouble; and so Johnny Church, an infantryman, was assigned to command the 24th Division. They had been taken out of the line and were in a rest area in an orchard behind the perimeter, resting and recuperating and reorganizing because they had just introduced Koreans into our units. They put so many Koreans in each part to beef it up and give it close to the standard number of people.

I joined that division about 31 August. I was the assistant division commander (ADC). We were in reserve. One day we got an order to relieve the Marine division, which was down south. Gen. Church sent me ahead of the division to meet with their G-3 and arrange for our taking over the positions they were holding along the Naktong River.

I did that one night, and the next day there was a breakthrough on the east coast of Korea near a town called P'ohang-dong. They called the Marine division and said, "Sequence off. You have to continue your position and the 24th Division has a job to do over on the east coast." I had my jeep and my driver, so we took off toward P'ohang-dong to the corps headquarters [ROK I Corps]. In the meantime our division came over and we physically located the divisions in the corps area. After our division got over there the clear penetration developed at P'ohang-dong, so on 9 September 1950 Gen. Church sent me with a regimental task force over to P'ohang-dong to plug the hole. That was my first operation over there. We had a successful operation and rejoined the division.

Soldiers of the 14th Engineer Battalion place a barbed wire entanglement on the banks of the Naktong River, 10 August 1950
Engineer School, Korea 011

Lieutenant Trayers describes his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy and his branch selection to the Corps of Engineers. Rushed to Korea as a replacement, he did not attend the Engineer Basic Course before reporting for duty. He received his indoctrination to combat on the Pusan Perimeter. Mounting casualties soon found him as a temporary company commander. Later he helped install and remove a minefield.

At West Point, cadets could choose only one of five branches: Infantry, Artillery, Armor, Engineer, and Signal Corps. These were considered at that time the five combat branches. We went into an assembly room and there was a blackboard in the front on which were written the number of vacancies available in each of the branches. The sum of all of the vacancies added up to the number of cadets who were graduating from West Point, minus the 25 percent who were going into the Air Force. You chose a branch based on your academic standing.

One officer had the roster of our academic standing and the other officer was in front of the blackboard with a piece of chalk. The one officer with the roll called out, "William Bradford DeGraf," the number one graduate in our class. Bill DeGraf stood up and said, "Infantry." He had been an infantry lieutenant before he went to West Point. The officer changed the number of vacancies in the infantry by minus one. Then the officer with the roll called the second person to graduate, "Charles Ozro Eshelman." Charlie Eshelman stood up and said "Engineer." With that the number of engineer vacancies was changed from 69 to 68. The third person called was "James Mason Thompson." He chose engineers, as did Robert Maris Wilson who graduated fourth in our class. After Wilson made his selection, 66 engineer vacancies were left. A large number of the people who graduated with high academic standings chose the engineers. Finally, they got around to "James Leo Trayers." I stood up and said, "Engineers." They changed the number from three to two, meaning that only two vacancies were left in the engineers.

The person who was sitting beside me during the selection of the branches was Warren Littlefield. Warren was undecided about which branch to choose. Even as he was standing up to announce the branch he was going to choose, he was saying, "Armor, Engineers, Armor, Engineers." When he stood up, he said, "Armor," and he went into the armor branch.

The graduates of the Military Academy Class of 1950 did not go to their Basic Course and, as a result, had no branch training before going to Korea. Warren had no training in armor. One time, when his patrol was attacking, it came under heavy mortar fire. Not realizing the safest place to be would have been to

remain in the tank, he got out and was running to seek cover under a bridge when he was killed by an incoming mortar round.

I selected the engineers because I was always fascinated with building things, such as highways, bridges, and buildings. I remember when I was a plebe going around to visit [making mandatory calls as they were called then], one of the upper classmen asked me what branch I was going to select; I said I was going to choose the engineers. He said, "Why do you want to go into the engineers?" I said, "I like to build things." He said, "Why don't you get an erector set?" I thought that was kind of humorous.

I was commissioned on 2 June. We graduated on 6 June, four days later. The reason we were commissioned on 2 June was because the Naval Academy was commissioned on the second. Graduates of the Naval Academy and the Military Academy would both go into the Air Force, and the Army did not want the Naval Academy graduates to have the seniority of four days commissioned service over the graduates of the Military Academy.

After we chose our branches, the 69 engineers went into another large room where they followed the same selection procedure—one officer with the roster, one with the piece of chalk. On the blackboard were the vacancies by theater for the engineers.

The name of the ranking engineer selectee, "Charles Ozro Eshelman," was called. He stood up and I believe he said, "Europe." The Europe and CONUS (continental United States) slots were soon filled. When it was my turn the only vacancies left were in the Far East Command, so I was ranked as going to the Far East. When I got to the Far East Command I was going to get further orders.

Two wounded soldiers of the 5th Regimental Combat Team receive medical care at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital
RG 111, SC-351944

I took my authorized leave of 60 days, 6 June to about 6 August. I landed in Korea sometime between 15-20 August at Pusan. As we were going through the replacement channel I noticed that the bleeding wounded were being returned to Korea. Soldiers

who were in the replacement stream had bandages with blood showing. While chatting with a couple of them they explained that they had been wounded in Korea and were on their way back. I had thought they kept the bleeding wounded in the hospital.

I was in Pusan for a couple of days and then I was given orders to the 1st Cavalry Division, which was in Korea at that time. Eddy West, a classmate of mine from West Point, and I made the journey to Korea together, and we both went into the G-1 of the 1st Cavalry Division together. The only records that we had with us were our I.D. cards, a copy of our orders, and our Form-66.

"You haven't been to your Basic Course?" We said, "No." He said, "Well, then you're as qualified to be an infantry officer as you are an engineer." So he reached into his pocket and he took out a 50-cent piece. He said, "You call it. If you get it right, you go to the engineers, otherwise we'll assign you to the infantry."

The Flip of a Coin

The 1st Cavalry was on line in the Pusan perimeter, on the Naktong River. The G-1 looked at the back of our Form-66 and the single line entry read, "Graduate, USMA." He said, "You haven't been to your Basic Course?" We said, "No." He said, "Well, then you're as qualified to be an infantry officer as you are an engineer." So he reached into his pocket and he took out a 50-cent piece. He said, "You call it. If you get it right, you go to the engineers, otherwise we'll assign you to the infantry." He flipped the coin in the air and it came down on his wrist. I think Eddy said, "Heads," and it was heads, so he said, "You both go to the engineers." That was how we were assigned to the engineers. Eddy West and I, being in the 1st Cavalry Division, were assigned to the 8th Engineer Combat Battalion. Eddy was assigned to A Company and I was assigned to C Company. The company commander of Company C was Capt. Alvin Siegal.

The commanding officer of the 8th Engineers at that time was Lt. Col. William C. Holley; the executive officer was Russell J. Wilson; the S-1 (Adjutant) was Capt. John A. Maxson; the S-2 (Intelligence Officer) was Capt. Samuel H. Yoast; the S-3 (Operations and Training Officer) was Maj. Glade S. Witwer; and the S-4 (Supply Officer) was Capt. Harvey C. Lewis.

Within a day or two I was reassigned to D Company. The company commander was Lt. Thomas Kennedy and the platoon leaders were Walter H. Radschlag, Richard O. Eiler, and Tom T. Jones [USMA, '48]. I was the fourth lieutenant. I was assigned as assistant platoon leader to Lt. Eiler because Lt. Kennedy realized that I hadn't been to the Basic Course. I was there for training.

It seemed to have been battalion policy that supplies were replenished either by swapping or stealing. Lt. Eiler and his platoon were known as "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" because they were so successful in resupplying. I also remember Lt. Eiler taking me fishing one time; he took a half-pound block of TNT and threw it in the lake. About 50 fish floated to the top. That was the first time I'd ever seen that. Coming from a big city—Boston—I didn't do much fishing.

Firefight at Hill 902 and the City of Ka-san, 4-5 September 1950

An engineer battalion has four companies, A, B, C, and D. We were organized into regimental combat teams. Company A supported the 5th Infantry, Company B supported the 7th Calvary, and Company C supported the 8th Calvary. Company D, which was backup for A, B, and C, served as reserve and handled the overflow requirements levied on the battalion.

Because it was the last uncommitted unit in the division, Company D was ordered to make a coordinated attack with Company E of the 8th Cavalry on Hill 902, on which was the walled city of Ka-san. Ka-san was not actually a city, but a section of wall along the crest of Hill 902, 10 miles north of Taegu. The 3,000-foot mountain afforded observation south through Eighth Army positions into Taegu itself.

We loaded up in the trucks one rainy, foggy afternoon [3 Sep 50] and drove down the road. We saw wounded South Korean soldiers coming back, but because of the time and the weather, and having no coordination with E Company, we returned to the company bivouac area at about 1900. I was designated by Lt. Kennedy to act as liaison officer with the 8th Cavalry. He told me to go over to the CP, introduce myself, and spend the night.

I went over and let the 8th Cavalry know that I was representing Lt. Kennedy, and if they had anything for him I would be happy to take it back. I put my tent and sleeping bag outside the

Two soldiers of the 27th Infantry Regiment fire on North Korean positions, 4 September 1950
RG 111, SC-347752

Later the trucks left the schoolyard. They were traveling quickly because they were being tracked down the road by 120-mm mortar fire. The trucks were going too fast, particularly since they had flat tires. One driver lost control of his truck and it spilled down into the ravine....

They put a grenade in his hand, pulled the pin, and said, "If the Koreans come, you know what to do."

CP and spent the night. Early the next morning I returned to D Company, which was loading up. We drove to the Hill 902. At the base of the hill was a schoolyard. Lt. Kennedy told me, "You're in charge of the trains. Park all of the trucks loaded with ammunition, rations, and water in the schoolyard." We were told that this was going to be a coordinated attack and to secure the top of the hill; there were estimated to be 75 North Korean guerrillas on that hill [enemy strength near Ka-san was closer to 800 on 4 Sep; it consisted of a North Korean regular army unit reinforced with 120-mm mortars].

The three platoons and Lt. Kennedy attacked up the hill. I stayed with the trucks in the schoolyard. The trucks and I came under heavy 120-mm mortar fire for the whole day. Mortars landed in the schoolyard and blew out the tires on the trucks and punctured their radiators. Later in the afternoon I was directed to return the trucks to the battalion CP area. I was to remain at the battalion advance CP where Col. Holley had been all day directing artillery fire on the hill.

Later the trucks left the schoolyard. They were traveling quickly because they were being tracked down the road by 120-mm mortar fire. The trucks were going too fast, particularly since they had flat tires. One driver lost control of his truck and it spilled down into the ravine. The other trucks slowed down then and were able to proceed out safely.

It was dark now and rainy. I went up to the CP area where Col. Holley was. He said, "I want you to go to the E Company commander and tell him to attack." I said, "Yes, Sir" and started walking down the road. It was so dark I couldn't see the road in front of me. I was whistling so that nobody would shoot me, because I was advancing into the E Company perimeter from the outside. Somebody yelled, "Halt!" I quickly stopped and explained who I was.

Somebody came out to meet me, and, by God, if it wasn't an ex-classmate from West Point whose name was Lt. Robert Wood, who later earned numerous decorations for bravery during the war. We recognized one another. He took me safely through the lines and delivered me to the company commander. I explained to the company commander what Col. Holley wanted. He said, "Yes, tomorrow." With my mission accomplished I reported back to Col. Holley, but he had gone. The I&R (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) platoon from the 7th Cavalry had set up a perimeter around this little CP (command post) area where we were, and provided security for us during the night.

On the afternoon of 4 September, D Company secured the top of the hill. Later we learned that the North Koreans surrounding the hill had opened their lines to let the engineers through, and then closed their lines and cut D Company off. On 5 September, Capt. Yoast arrived and said that he had Korean laborers

This young boy wears an A-frame pack similar to those used by porters to carry ammunition and supplies RG 111, SC-344541

and supplies to deliver to D Company. He had trucks, ammunition, rations, and water, and was going to re-supply D Company on top of the hill.

We had maybe forty Koreans, all loaded down with supplies, starting up the hill. It was a winding, torturous path, if there was a path at all. The hill was steep and the brush and trees were thick. I was policing the end of the column, making sure that everybody in front of me was moving up the hill. We were being shot at with small arms fire and with mortars. I noticed as I was going along this one soldier wasn't taking cover at all. He was just walking along, standing straight up. I said to him, "Soldier, you ought to take some cover. You may get shot." He said, "Okay." I continued ducking from rock to rock, and then I heard somebody call "*Medic!*" The soldier whom I had just spoken to had been shot and was down on the ground.

I went over to him, praying to the Lord that there wouldn't be blood, and opened up his fatigue jacket to see where the wound was. The bullet hit a pencil, was deflected downward, and then entered his chest. It was starting to swell, but there was no blood. The bullet had traveled a long distance so it was well spent by the time it hit the soldier. I figured that the bullet had at the most broken a couple of ribs. I got two soldiers to return the injured man to the battalion CP area, cautioning them to be very careful. If the bullet did break some ribs, I didn't want the ribs to puncture a lung.

"I knew he was in the thick of fighting by the sound of his letter," Mrs. Trayers said. "It didn't make me feel a bit good, but as long as he's safe, I'm a happy mother."

— Boston Traveler, October 6, 1950

There were a number of Koreans in front of me moving in and out of the trees because we were being shot at continuously. I could not see farther than a few Koreans in front of me because of the terrain. We stopped to take cover from incoming fire for several minutes. The column ahead of me was not moving. I walked to the front of the few Koreans I could see, looked ahead, and saw that no one else was to be seen. I decided that since I did not know where I was going, that it was time to return to the advance battalion CP. I don't know exactly what time of day it was, but it was late in the afternoon. It was a good decision because when I arrived in the battalion advance CP, I was told that the company had been ordered to withdraw.

As we were going up the hill, Lts. Kennedy and Radschlag, both of whom had been wounded, were being taken down the road to the aide station. Remnants of the company started coming back and began assembling in the company area. The North Koreans captured Tom Jones. Lt. Eiler, who was a platoon leader, was running with Sgt. Manelsky, and one other sergeant to escape from the North Koreans. They came to a stone wall. Manelsky and the sergeant jumped over the wall. Lt. Eiler leaned on the wall. The sergeants were exhorting him to jump over the wall. He said, "I've got to rest…I've got to rest." While he was leaning on the wall the inside of his thigh was shot out with .51-caliber machine-gun bullet. He was severely wounded and was losing a lot of blood. The sergeants took him down over the other side of the wall, put a tourniquet on his wound, and carried him to a nearby shed.

They said, "We're going to get a wagon from one of the houses here and we'll come back to get you." They put a grenade in his hand, pulled the pin, and said, "If the Koreans come, you know what to do." Then they went to get the cart. By the time they had found the cart and returned, the Koreans had come down and captured Lt. Eiler. It was discovered later that he must still have been alive and had not detonated the grenade; his hands were bound with wire and his body was burned.

It was during this engagement that Pvt. Melvin Brown of our company distinguished himself for bravery. During the fighting around Ka-san he killed a number of North Korean soldiers with his rifle and grenades, and when he had run out of ammunition he continued to protect the company's retreat with his entrenching tool. When they recovered Brown's body they found the bodies of 20 North Korean soldiers scattered around his position. For his heroism Pvt. Brown was awarded the Medal of Honor.

I returned to the battalion CP and found that I was the only officer left in the company. First Sgt. Kopper told me that the battalion commander wanted to talk to me. I went over to the radio and he gave

me the microphone. I picked it up and said, "Colonel Holley, this is Lieutenant Trayers." Sgt. Kopper leaned over and said, "You've got to push the button." Being left handed, I had the microphone in my left hand and the button wasn't in the right place to push. So, while I was talking I wasn't being received. So I pushed the microphone button down and repeated the same thing. "Colonel. Holley, this is Lieutenant Trayers." I immediately got chewed out over the radio because I wasn't using proper radio procedure. I should have said, "Sandbag Six, this is Sandbag Dog Six, over."

Col. Holley explained to me that he wanted me to move the company out and gave the coordinates in code. I assured him that we would do it. I asked Sgt. Kopper, "How do you move the company out?" He said, "Well, first give me the coordinates." I gave him the coded coordinates and he deciphered the code and showed me a map where the company was going to go. I asked again, "Sergeant, how do I move the company out?" He said, "Just tell me." So, I said, "Sergeant. Kopper, move the company out." By God, in 30 minutes tents were struck, trucks were loaded, engines were turning over, and the company was lined up and ready to go.

He said, "Lieutenant, I would suggest that you tell me to proceed onto the area so I can outline where the people are going to go." I then told the 1st sergeant to proceed to the designated area in advance of the column and to lie out the bivouac area. He then gave me the map with the road that went to that area. As we were driving down the road, I said to myself, "Boy, this being an officer is pretty good. I just tell the sergeants what to do and they get it done." We went to the new company bivouac area where Col. Holley, in his infinite wisdom, sent down a senior lieutenant to command the company.

A reporter from the Boston Traveler filed this account of 2d Lt. Trayers's activities in Korea Trayers Collection

Hal Clancy in Korea

Hub Officer Sure Fire On a Mine-Busting Job

Proves Army Engineers Don't Just Build Bridges

By HAL CLANCY

SOMEWHERE IN KOREA, Oct. 6—If you think Army engineers just build bridges, you should look up someone like 2nd Lt. James L. Trayers of 10 Pleasant Hill avenue, Dorchester.

YOU WON'T FIND HIM in Dorchester now, of course. He leads a platoon in D Co. of the 8th Engineers in Korea.

I looked him up in a reeking river bed—and quickly learned why even the proud infantry thinks highly of the combat engineers.

TRAYERS' MISSION was to clear a mine field which our troops had lain down during the early days of retreat. The Reds had left them in place and now our tanks were tied down until the fields could be cleared.

This mine field stretched possibly 40 yards down a ledge road that twisted around the side of a hill. It was under direct enemy observation and fire.

TWICE TRAYERS TRIED to

CLANCY

(Continued on Page Twenty-one)

2D LT. JAMES L. TRAYERS

Installing and Removing a Minefield

We were still in the Pusan perimeter. The next mission that I received was to put in a minefield. The minefield was to be placed where the terrain was admirably suited for the installation of mines. On the left side of the road there was a deep cut, which together with the high vertical embankment on the right side of the road channeled all enemy tanks and vehicles down to the roadbed. Sgt. Manelsky, who was the platoon sergeant, took the platoon out to put in the minefield. He outlined the way the minefield would go in. He suggested that we put in several rows of anti-tank mines, staggered so that the entire width of the road was covered.

I looked in the FM 5-34 [field manual] that I carried in the pocket of my fatigues. It told you everything you had to know about minefields. It discussed taking accurate measurements between the mines and establishing an accurate azimuth and distance to the right rear reference point, and establishing an accurate azimuth to the topographic marker. The manual also specified that it was the responsibility of the lieutenant in charge to take the measurements.

As things were progressing I was up in the minefield measuring the distances between the mines. Sgt. Manelsky came over and said, "Lieutenant, I think it would be better if you were to go over there and sit down and watch what we're doing." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Well, the men are afraid you'll get hurt." I said, "I looked in the FM and I'm supposed to do this." He said, "I'll take the measurements *for* you. But more importantly, they're afraid with you in the minefield *they're* going to get hurt." I agreed to take a position to the rear and allowed the platoon sergeant to take the measurements, install the mines, and then check the measurements after the minefield was installed.

A little while later Sgt. Manelsky came over and said, "Lieutenant, shall we booby-trap the mines?" I said, "Tell me about booby-traps." He said, "The kind we would put in is a pressure-release type, which means that if the enemy were to pick the mine up and didn't know it was booby trapped, it would set off the mine." I said, "How do you do it?" He said, "Well, we put the mine in on a solid base and tunnel in from the back of the mine. After the mine is in position, we carefully remove the pin, and then we cover it over." I said, "I think we ought to do it because the North Koreans are coming down, taking our mines, and using them against us."

That was my second order. My first was to move the company out. The second one was to booby-trap the minefields. After the mission was completed I prepared a minefield report and turned it into the battalion S-2.

A few days later, I was given the mission to remove the same minefield. We went out in the after-

Before we got the order to remove the minefield, a North Korean truck, one that was loaded with ammunition and had some soldiers on it, hit the minefield and blew up. Now the minefield pattern was disturbed and strewn with truck fragments and covered with dirt. We didn't know which mines had detonated and which ones had not detonated.

Engineer School, 119-11-34

Engineer School, 119-11-3

Engineers from the 25th Infantry Division unload and emplace anti-tank mines along a reference tape, August 1950

noon to take the minefield out. One of the fundamental rules after installing a minefield is that it should be under your observation and covered by friendly fire. Unfortunately, in this case the minefield was covered by enemy fire. They had a machine gun that was laid right over the minefield, and so every time we went out there they'd fire the machine gun. I decided that we couldn't remove the minefield in daylight and that we'd have to go up and take it out under the cover of darkness.

Before we got the order to remove the minefield, a North Korean truck, one that was loaded with ammunition and had some soldiers on it, hit the minefield and blew up. Now the minefield pattern was disturbed and strewn with truck fragments and covered with dirt. We didn't know which mines had detonated and which ones had not detonated. It was not necessary that a vehicle go over a mine to detonate it because if the mine was within a certain distance of the explosion, it would explode by sympathetic detonation.

After the explosion the minefield was covered with body and vehicle parts. Having seen the minefield that afternoon I decided to use a net made of primer cord and half-pound blocks of TNT. We took a strand of primer cord, maybe 30 feet long, and at every foot we tied on a half-pound block of TNT. We made enough of these strands of primer cord and TNT to form a grid such that every foot, north and south, and east and west, there was a half-pound block of TNT. When we exploded all of this primer cord and TNT simultaneously, it would cause the explosion of any mines in the minefield.

That evening, under cover of darkness, we went up to do that. I took up the first strand of TNT and stretched it across the minefield. A soldier could step on an anti-tank mine and it wouldn't explode because the pounds-per-square-inch of a person is less than the pounds-per-square-inch of a tank. That was why I could walk in the minefield and stretch my strand of primer cord across it. Sgt. Paul Chambers went up with the second strand of primer cord and he laid it in the minefield one foot apart from the first one. Then it was Sgt. Cyrus Whitby's turn to go up. He laid his strand out. While he was in the minefield, the enemy lobbed in some mortar shells and killed him in the minefield. We went up and recovered his body.

The next night we added some explosives to the minefield and blew up the primer cord that we had already placed in the minefield. I was sure that the right-hand side of the minefield was clear, but the left-hand side was not. I reported this to the tank company commander.

The next day the 1st Cavalry Division moved up a Waegwan road, which was the road we had cleared the night before. The road had a curve in it a bit past the

minefield. Because he was lining up his vehicle to navigate the oncoming turn, the first tank through the minefield didn't stay far enough to the right. As it went through the minefield it hit a mine, blew a track, and coasted forward until it came to a stop in front of the minefield.

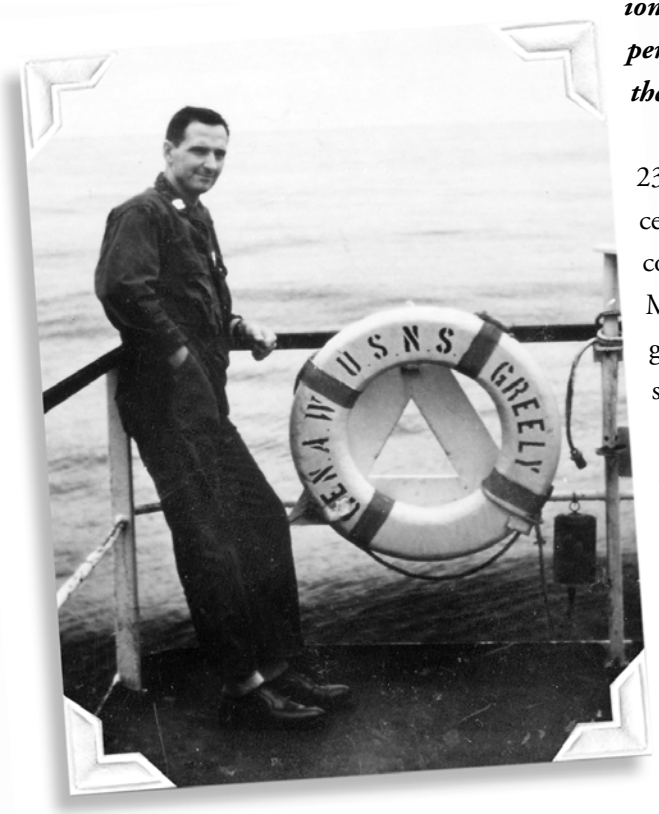
The disabled tank now was blocking the route of attack so that the rest of the tanks couldn't get by. By the time they had removed the tank from the road the day was well spent. The division commander called off the attack for that day. The next day the division was ready to make its attack again and the tank company went through the minefield without any trouble. The lead tank went about 50 yards past our minefield and hit another mine.

What happened was that during the night the North Koreans had come down and put a mine or two in the road in front of my minefield. The company commander of the infantry unit that was securing the position said that his soldiers heard digging but they didn't know what the digging was. Now another tank was blocking the route of advance. That tank was pushed off to the side of the road and the attack continued north. So much for minefields, minefield reports, and booby trapping.

Engineers check a disabled tank for booby traps, and the area around it for mines Engineer School, 116-13-1

Captain Lawrence B. Farnum 2d Engineer Combat Battalion

With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, Captain Farnum describes the efforts to man, equip, and train his unit, the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), for deployment overseas. Soon after their arrival in Korea, the 2d ECB moved up into the line. In late August and early September the battalion was deployed as infantry during the heavy fighting around the Naktong perimeter. The battalion played a vital role in stabilizing the perimeter and suffered heavy casualties in the process.



Capt. Lawrence Farnum on his way to Korea, late summer, 1950
Farnum Collection

I arrived at Fort Lewis to join the 23d Infantry, 2d Infantry Division, in December 1948. After getting my Regular Army commission in the Corps of Engineers in late March 1950, I was transferred to the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion, and my first assignment there was as the assistant S-2.

When the North Koreans invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950, I had been in the 2d Engineers less than three months. The 2d Division was alerted for POM, and right off the bat it was a question of determining who was going to stay in the division. Certain officers had career development considerations that would take priority. By and large everybody was alerted and we went on a high state of readiness to get all of our TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment) up to snuff and get our fillers in.

We were short a lot of people. I really don't know the percentages but, to fill us, it took considerable effort. On 3 July, I became the S-1; therefore, it was my responsibility to make sure we had all the officers that we were authorized, and all the sergeants and enlisted personnel.

For days we had telephone communications with Fort Belvoir on a standby basis of maybe eight hours a day. They were assisting us in locating specialists in different fields, getting equipment that we were authorized and didn't have, getting some of our more obsolete equipment transferred out, and getting new equipment in.

We immediately filled our Company A to full strength. Any shortages of equipment were met by transfer from the other line companies or other units at Fort Lewis not alerted so that Company A could depart with the 9th Infantry, our first element to head for Korea. After Company A was fully equipped and manned in less than one week, we worked on Company B, and then Company C.

Officers such as a Harold Curry, whom I replaced as the adjutant and S-1, stayed there for a while helping with the requisitions that we had to process. He was scheduled to go to school for career development.

We had to get those people out of the organization and other people in so we could deploy to Korea.

We had phone contacts with so many different places it is hard to account for, but a battalion needs clerk-typists, finance people, and the whole gamut of capabilities. It seemed as if we were dealing with Forts Benning, Knox, and about every base that had any kind of a training mission all over the entire U.S. to fill this one division that was going to be deployed to Japan and Korea.

We succeeded in filling our TO&E. Much of our equipment needed to be replaced. Old World War II equipment needed to be turned in, and replacement trucks, jeeps—everything that you can think of—procured to replace it. We expedited one company at a time to meet the schedule that was set, having the 9th RCT leave first, followed by the 23d, and the 38th, then remainder of the division and divisional elements.

We accomplished it all on a very short schedule. Prior to our due date to arrive in Japan, things in Korea had deteriorated to the point that while the ships were on the high seas, the orders were changed. All elements of the 2d Division went straight into Korea.

Concerning our readiness in 1950 to get the 2d Infantry Division—one of our front-line divisions—on board ship with the full TO&E took major resources across our country to send people in as fillers, then to train people to operate small items like the new 3.5-inch anti-tank bazooka. We had to obtain this weapon then get our people trained. There were these types of problems—last-minute qualifications on the range, and all of the things that suddenly should have been done yesterday. You needed to do them, and yet you needed to sail on a ship within a week's time.

To the best of my knowledge the division did a fine job of getting the first RCT off, fully equipped and manned, in about a week's time. The ships came in; we loaded them and sent them on their way. The

Destined for Korea, U.S. troops prepare to board troop transports at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, 1950
USNI, 343163

Members of the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion pose for a photograph near the Naktong River. Front row, left to right: Capt. Farnum and Lt. Bergner. Back row: Lt. Harris, Lt. Brighton, and W.O. Meeks
Farnum Collection

next RCT followed about a week later, and so on down the line.

We had a very limited number of Regular Army officers in the battalion. I think, perhaps, I was the only one, until Lt. Col. Alarick Zacherle was transferred from division headquarters to the battalion once we were in Korea. I think we were the only two Regular Army types at that time.

Zacherle had been in the 2d Battalion at Fort Lewis, I believe, as the S-3, as a major. He had been transferred to division headquarters, and his job at first was secretary of the general staff. I'm sure that as soon as we were deployed to Korea, Col. Zacherle wanted to be with the battalion, and not at division headquarters.

Our battalion commander, Lt. Col. McEachern, flew to Japan with the assistant division commander and a group of the division staff very early on, as soon as we were alerted. It was thought, originally, that we would be going into Japan to replace some of the units there that were being deployed to Korea, so he was not with us during the hubbub and furor of being deployed.

The division arrived in country as regimental combat teams and our Companies A, B, and C were attached to the three regiments. Upon arrival, the 9th RCT was placed into the line, and our engineers were used as needed. The same was true of B and C. As soon as the entire battalion arrived, the companies basically reverted to battalion control and were placed in direct support of the regiments.

Heavy Officer Casualties

We had only been in Korea a very brief time when the battalion was called upon to go in the line as infantry, to plug a particular salient point where the North Koreans were threatening the integrity of the Naktong perimeter line. Our Company D was on a particular hill. During that single operation they lost their company commander, killed in action; another lieutenant, platoon leader, killed in action; two more platoon leaders, wounded. Lt. Lee Beahler was the sole remaining officer. The company was very successful in plugging the line and stopping the North Korean advance at that time. Lt. Beahler received the Distinguished Service Cross, and the engineers, Company D in particular, were credited by Eighth Army as probably being a key element in maintaining the Naktong perimeter. If that particular penetration had gone through, we could very well have lost our foothold in Korea.

For at least a week's period, 31 August-12 September, the engineer battalion was utilized as infantry.

Our assignments would be as a reserve element of one of our infantry regiments to be in a blocking position. We just happened to be in a position in the defense of Yongsan, which was one of the key towns in that area where there was a deep penetration by the North Koreans coming from the west. Our line companies had suffered sufficient casualties, so we assigned several of the H&S (Headquarters and Service) officers over to the line companies. In Company D, alone, all the officers, save Lt. Beahler, were either killed or wounded. We obviously had heavy losses within the other companies because one of our H&S officers, Joe Cox, who was normally the battalion motor officer, was assigned to one of the line companies. John Bergner, who was the leader of our bridge section, also was assigned to one of the companies, as well as Lt. Lehman and W.O. Falls. In that particular action we lost Capt. Reeves, CO of Company C, who was killed in action, Lt. Matoni, and Lt. Forste. At least nine other officers were wounded and evacuated.

In early September, our battalion commander was relieved by the assistant division commander. The reason given at the time was lack of leadership and the ability to utilize his engineers as infantry. At that time, Maj. Fry assumed the command of the battalion, and Col. McEachern went to our division rear.

We came off the role of infantry about 17 September and started working on the roads. This coincided with the landings of other U.S. forces in the Inch'on area. Due to this maneuver on the part of the U.S. forces, the North Koreans were in a position to be cut off completely in the south. Basically, they went into a full retreat to the north.

We continued to lose some officers in that period. I know that Lt. Reed, who was commanding Company A, was wounded, and a couple of our officers had to be evacuated for combat fatigue. At the time, we referred to them as having gone "psycho." This was more an aftermath of them having seen their friends killed or wounded while serving as infantry in the defense of Yongsan. A fair number of people had been evacuated to Japan, and among them were Lt. Wilson, who also had combat fatigue; Lt. Webb, who was wounded and evacuated; and out of Company C, Lt. Jalicour, wounded. Out of Company D, Lt. Nichols was wounded and evacuated; Lt. Donahue, also wounded and evacuated; and out of our H&S Company, Lt. Burr was wounded and evacuated.

Living out of very limited facilities with no place to dry off your feet, change your socks, and do things like that, we lost some of our people due to blistered feet, and basically a jungle rot that came with having your feet wet all day and night from walking through the rice paddies.

With the North Koreans in retreat it seemed obvious that the 2d Division and all the forces in Eighth Army down in the Naktong area would proceed

We had only been in Korea a very brief time when the battalion was called upon to go in the line as infantry…where the North Koreans were threatening the integrity of the Naktong perimeter line.... If that particular penetration had gone through, we could very well have lost our foothold in Korea.

north towards Seoul. The Naktong was a sizable barrier to motorized transport in our area and varied in width from 250 to 500 feet. It was a meandering river, sometimes going north and south and other times east and west. As the operations officer at that time, I made a reconnaissance, along with our bridge platoon leader, John Bergner, for a site to put in our bridge across the Naktong.

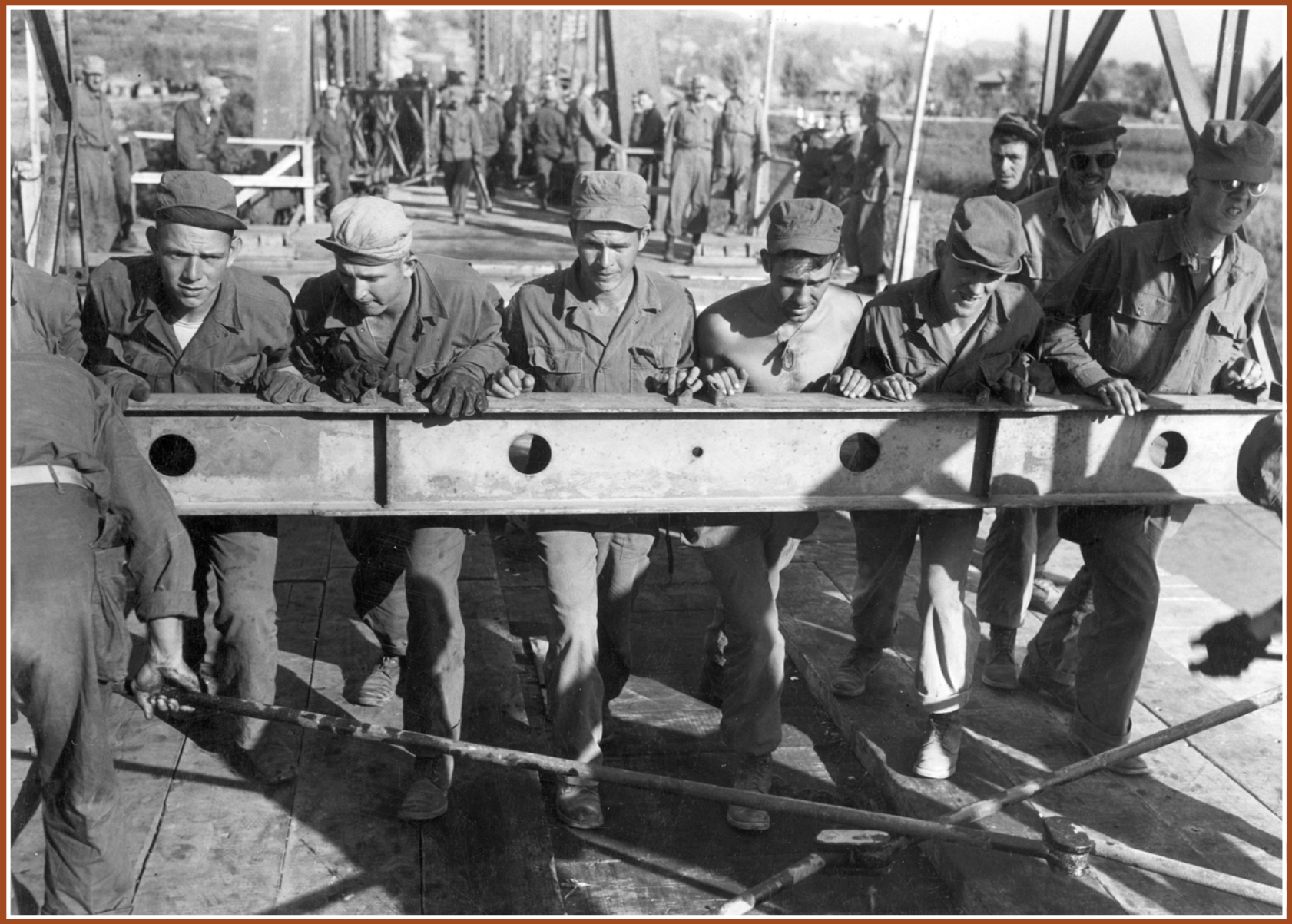
During that period in the war effort, we received no replacements that I can remember. About the same time, some of the people who were enlisted members of the battalion and held a reserve commission were recalled to active duty. Among them was Bob Green who was recalled. He was our operations sergeant, and he was recalled as a 1st lieutenant. He was assigned out to one of the line companies. We gave a couple of field commissions to some of our sergeants at that time. Two I remember because they were at headquarters—one was Sgt. Hatfield and the other sergeant was Jim Malone.

With the relief of Col. McEachern, we were expecting Maj. Zacherle to be assigned to the battalion. He had been with the battalion back at Fort Lewis but was now serving in the division headquarters. He was a Regular Army engineer officer.

On 21 September, Maj. Carl Price, who was our S-3, was shot in the leg and evacuated to Japan. Capt. Anderson was evacuated as sick to Japan. We had a problem with some bouts of encephalitis B, which was a rather serious malady to the Americans and required fast evacuation to Japan. Some of them were fatalities from that disease.

Maj. Zacherle reported to the battalion on 23 September. Charlie Fry, who was then the battalion commander, ranked Maj. Zacherle as a major.

Engineers build a Bailey bridge across the Naktong River at Waegwan, 1 October 1950 Engineer School, 42-10-206



First Lieutenant Charles M. Bussey 77th Engineer Combat Company

The following essay is excerpted and reprinted, with permission from* Firefight at Yechon: Courage & Racism in the Korean War, *by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bussey, with permission of the University of Nebraska Press © 1991 by Charles M. Bussey. The 77th Engineer Combat Company (ECC) was a separate African American company assigned to the 25th Infantry Division to provide engineer support to the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment. It was not part of the white 65th Engineer Combat Battalion, which provided support to the rest of the division. The 77th had an authorized strength of five officers and 153 enlisted men, but most of the time had more than 200 men, since most African American combat engineers in the Pacific were assigned to it.

Retreat from Sangju

The 77th ECC was given a series of missions to protect elements of the 25th Division, which were moving back from the Sangju area into the Pusan perimeter. Our first mission was to blow a crater in the main supply route (MSR) to the north that would preclude passage of tanks; the selection of the site was optional. The second mission was to perform a rearguard action at the crater for 12 hours. The third mission was to destroy the throughput capability of rail traffic and demolish all switches, frogs [track-switching devices], and rail necessary to deactivate the Sangju rail yard. The fourth, and final, mission was to destroy the three southern spans of the bridge across the Kum River to include the south abutment. I was to report to the division engineer upon completion of these missions.

We selected a site on the MSR where we could blow an inside curve with no possibility for bypassing and little possibility for combat-quality repair. A Lt. Zandis from the infantry was designated to be the last and final contact person; his arrival at the demolition site would signal that all elements and individuals of the regiment would have evacuated their combat sectors. This would be my authority to blow the crater. Lt. Zandis was due at the crater site at 0400.

He was on time. He assured me that all 24th Infantry personnel had cleared the area and that I could blow the crater at any time.

It had taken 10 hours to place nearly 1,500 pounds of TNT deep into the mountainside. Zandis had a cup of coffee as dawn crept over the barren hills. I looked down the long empty back road, and then walked over to the site of the crater with the generator, or "hellbox," in my pocket. I connected the box to the electrical blasting wire after "proving" the circuit with the galvanometer. "Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!" I vigorously twisted the T-handle on the generator and the whole world blew up in a cloud of

rocks, dust, and cordite. It was the crack of doom! I felt a surge of elation as we awaited the settling of a virtual cloud of dust. I wanted to inspect our handiwork.

When I arrived back at the crater, day was breaking. Nobody was to be seen on the back road. I prepared to send most units to Sangju and beyond and to man the roadblock with one of Lt. Chester Lenon's squads across the arroyo.

High above me on a cliff overlooking the crater a soldier yelled down, "Sir, you just blew up two men in that blast. They were coming up the road when you blew it. They were on the edge of the crater. See their shoes and belts and carbines? That's them laying against the bank, down there about a hundred yards."

I looked, but there was a slight bend in the road that blocked my vision. That is how the two people had been able to move up to the site of the crater without my seeing them. I could feel the gates of Leavenworth clanging shut on me. With a couple of my officers, I hurriedly climbed the hill, skirted the bend, and descended to the victims of the blast.

The sun was casting long horizontal rays over our heads as we climbed down the hillside. At the level of the back road I was looking into the eyes of my dear friend Capt. William Jackson. He wasn't focusing well but he knew it was me. So he asked, "Tryin' to kill me, Hoss?"

"God, no, Jackson. But it was still too dark to see you, and Zandis was my contact. He got here about a half-hour ago. He was supposed to be the last man out."

"Well, it was a typical snafu. We had a short firefight as we were disengaging. I think I've got a concussion. My eyesight comes and goes. You may have done me a big favor, homeboy. Five thousand men and their vehicles and equipment were supposed to pass this point. Two men late ain't too bad. Sorry I'm one of them though."

I looked over at Jackson's companion, a Lt. Morgan, who was silently crying. He looked at me as if I was the personification of death. I *had* been, nearly. I sent for some stretchers to carry the two of them back over the hills. Jackson asked me, "Where's my shoes, my web equipment, and my carbine?"

"Don't ask me how, but all your stuff is about two feet from the edge of the crater. I'm glad you weren't one step farther to the east or you'd be dead and I'd be on the short end of a court martial."

Jackson and Morgan both had concussions and were evacuated back to Japan, but not for long. Personnel were in short supply. Injured personnel were returned from the hospital to the combat zone as soon

Left to right: Lt. David Carlisle, Lt. Collins Whitacker, and Cpl. Paul Witt of the 77th Engineers probe for a booby trap under a mine RG 111, 348837

As mortal combat deliberately comes closer and closer, an attitude of dead seriousness overtakes the protagonists. A pain rises out of one's spine, tightness grows between one's shoulder blades, and the stark reality of imminent death intrudes on one's consciousness.

as possible. So both of them were back to duty in about two weeks.

Crater Fight, 29 July 1950

I had done the first part of the mission by blowing the crater. Now I had to secure it for 12 hours. First, it was about time for breakfast and the food went down well. After breakfast, I carved up the company mission among the platoons. When all was well, the company, minus the squad remaining with me, fired up their engines and motored down the road to the city of Sangju.

During the proceeding day and night we had prepared foxholes. We moved into them as the morning began to heat up. It was yet another day when the temperature was going to climb to 110 degrees F. by noon. We waited and waited. We had been issued 3.5-inch bazookas, which were touted to be tank killers—real effective hell busters, the living end. I believed it all. I was manning one along with Cpl. Jerome Barnwell.

The enemy came. They moved cautiously up the road and our boredom ceased. Adrenaline began to tighten us up. First, there was a squad or so of infantry on the road. Then came a small Russian-built tank. The temperature grew hotter, and the enemy task force came closer. As mortal combat deliberately comes closer and closer, an attitude of dead seriousness overtakes the protagonists. A pain rises out of one's spine, tightness grows between one's shoulder blades, and the stark reality of imminent death intrudes on one's consciousness. The question of fight or flight arises. But there was no possibility of flight. A sense of patriotism takes control. It justifies whatever killing is to ensue—the possibility of one's own demise or the probability of the enemy's. "America, America, land that I love." Nothing else matters except the killing—powerful, glorious, bloody, overpowering killing.

We hunkered down in our foxholes and the enemy drew ever closer. The game plan provided for no firing of small arms or automatic weapons until the bazooka had eviscerated the tank. We waited and waited still more amid the ever-mounting tension, and the adrenaline flowed, charging our bodies higher and higher and still higher.

The enemy infantry arrived at the crater. Animated conversation and gesticulation took place. After sizing up the situation they began to survey the terrain. We were hunkered well down into our foxholes and were not observed. So the enemy squad leader radioed to the tank. It lumbered up the grade to the point of impasse—literally and figuratively. The tank could not negotiate the crater.

The tank crawled right to the edge of the crater. I was tight as a cat on a rail fence. I touched the trigger of the bazooka as the sighting hairs steadied right on the guts of the tank. Blam! While the missile was still in flight,

Cpl. Barnwell reloaded. As soon as he touched my helmet, I fired a second round. Double hell broke loose.

There was no doubt that two direct hits had knocked out the tank. Through smoke and dust my men had begun firing. They were chewing up the startled enemy infantry all around the tank. Some who weren't hit managed to rush to the cover of the tank itself. Although it had lost its tracks, it was still intact. But the tank was not dead. Ponderously, that giant 89-mm gun started to swing onto our bearing. Blam! I fired a third missile. It exploded in virtually the same armored spot as my first two.

Suddenly Cpl. Barnwell yelled, "Look behind us, sir!" I jerked my head around. Up the hill to our rear a huge gray-white arrow had been gouged out of the dirt by the bazooka's backblast. It pointed directly into our foxhole. Goddamn, I thought.

The snout of the 89-mm tank gun stopped dead on us. Ka-whump! The whole world moved at the first impact and kept on, registering 10s on the Richter scale, through a total of forty-seven rounds. I shivered as I counted the rounds.

Scared, we hunkered more and more deeply into the foxhole as frantically we tried to prove that a man-size object could shrink through sheer willpower into an infinitesimal point. We were trapped, shivering, and that bastard across the arroyo was trying to dig us out or to eliminate us altogether. Dust and cordite began choking us to death. I managed only enough awareness of our predicament to continue counting each successive earth-shattering ka-whump! I kept saying over and over, "Damn, Bussey, you screwed up again!"

First, I had trusted our ordnance people's assessment of the enemy weapon. Second, I had overlooked entirely the backblast characteristics of my own weapon. Third, I had been overly eager to engage the tank. After all, it couldn't go anywhere or do anything. I should simply have left it alone. Finally, I should never have emerged from my mother's womb.

At some point the enemy tank's machine gun opened up on my troops. They had continued to fire on the enemy infantry. The tank gun finally slowed its cyclic rate of firing. Either it was overheating, or the crew was running out of ammo. Finally it stopped—almost.

I looked over at Barnwell. His eyes were red. His face was totally begrimed in tanish, grayish dust. I had to laugh. Looking at me he also laughed. Owlishly, we blinked. Tears cleansed our eye sockets. We both rose up a little to assess our situation. Unfortunately, the tank was ready to resume.

Ka-whump! There was hardly any time between the gun's report and the shell's explosion beneath our foxhole. The sun had kept doing its thing, and it became stiflingly hot as we approached midday. Shaking, grimy, disgusted…the corporal and I shared a K ration.

We stayed well down in our hole for fear we couldn't duck fast enough the next time. We had reached an impasse. Stalemated, we waited in the stifling noonday.

Fortunately—through pure happenstance—I had spaced our foxholes so that we had extended coverage of the MSR. We covered 1,000 yards or so of the road and bordering hillsides. When a company-size enemy force came into view, we could let them advance into extreme BAR (Browning automatic rifle) range but no farther. Fortunately, also, two of our foxholes were out of view of the crippled tank.

Seemingly, only darkness would afford us a means of safe escape. By 1600 I would have fulfilled my assigned mission and we would be free to leave. In tactical language, we would be able to disengage from the enemy. If, that is, he would permit us to do so.

Engineers use 120 pounds of explosives, placed on the top of the pier and the inside of each beam, to destroy this railroad bridge RG 111, SC-359427

The day wore hard on us, but not as hard on us as on the tank crew. We kept them bottled up tight. No matter how many tank ports might be open, there was very little ventilation. That enemy endured a very hot and long afternoon.

Time passed—1600 came and went. About 1630 the sun had declined to an angle that brought some respite from the burning, blistering heat. The barren hills began to lose some heat, and it became slightly less miserable. The corporal and I shared a C ration. We drank the last of our water. A thought came to mind: I didn't need to be here at all. After all, I was the boss of the 77th ECC and, as such, I could have, and perhaps should have, been in Sangju in some shady place. Any of my lieutenants could have handled this roadblock just as well and probably better. But I was a slave to my convictions. One of them was never to send my men into a situation I would not go into myself. So, at this time, at this place, here is where I belong and here is where I should be.

Rain of Stones, 30 July 1950

No matter the hazard, if one works at an occupation or chore long enough there's a strong tendency to become a little careless on occasion. We were moving back into the Pusan perimeter, withdrawing from Sangju. Division sent down a demolition plan and made the explosives available to carry it off. We burned the rice warehouses at Sangju and destroyed the switches and frogs in the rail-marshaling yard. Theoretically we were denying the productive systems to the enemy. This was farcical in the extreme because the enemy had no trains or rolling

stock of any kind, and if they acquired any, our Air Force would've had a field day with it. Ours was not to reason why! Systematically we accomplished the demolition plan—burning and destroying as we retreated.

We practiced the engineer school guidance on demolition techniques with strong emphasis on safety. I always carried the generator, so there could never be an accidental firing. All charges were prepared both for electrical firing and for fuse firing. On those rare and dangerous occasions when the electrical firing failed, we waited the prescribed period, gingerly lit the fuse, and then ran as though pursued by the devil to be out of harm's way when the demolition exploded. It was exacting and dangerous work.

We fired bridges, dams, electrical transmission stations, and railroads—everything in the demolition plan. Any equipment or installation that could be beneficial to the enemy had to be destroyed. It all went well—until our last target.

The countryside was peaceful. The rice paddies were green. The weather was hot and dry as we prepared our last bridge for destruction. The 2d Platoon placed the charges three spans out: deck, pier, pier, deck, and abutment. The rest of the company, except for the security element, swam and luxuriated in the slow current of the Kum River, which was wide, shallow, and warm at that point. We leisurely inhaled the cans of beer that the American people deigned to allow us over the violent objection of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and other do-gooder outfits.

When the charges were all placed and wired, we ate the evening meal and got the trucks up on the road heading south. Sgt. Woods and I went back to the bridge to set off the charges. Sgt. Woods was a favorite of mine. I guess it was because I understood him so well. He came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and he was a hell-for-leather guy. He gave the impression of not giving a damn, but in reality he cared. He loved a challenge, and he was strong, tough, and ghetto smart. There was nothing he didn't know about equipment operation and field engineering. He was rare. I had served with him in the 74th Engineer Battalion in the States. He was not very popular there because he was considered to be a know-it-all, and he was. I had no problem with him because he was a top-flight soldier. He was also reliable and loyal. Whenever there was anything difficult, dangerous, or urgent, he came to mind. So I was glad he and I were working together on this demolition job.

When we got back to the bridge site, I connected the action wire, which ended close to the abutment charge. We played out the reel of wire after getting a positive reading on my galvanometer. I paced off the distance as the wire played out: exactly 100 yards. I made a rapid calculation, which indicated that for the amount of TNT in the abutment, the minimum safe distance was 180 yards. But there was no more action

I didn't need to be here at all....Any of my lieutenants could have handled this roadblock just as well and probably better. But I was a slave to my convictions. One of them was never to send my men into a situation I would not go into myself. So, at this time, at this place, here is where I belong and here is where I should be.

"Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!" With a twist of the little black handle the whole world erupted. We started to run away from the bridge, but looking up I could see that the sky was full of boulders—some as large as jeeps. They landed all around us with sickening thuds.

wire and I was in a hurry. Sunset was nearing and what the hell? I looked at Woods. He shrugged his shoulders, and like a damned fool, I abandoned caution, cleared, and connected the hellbox.

"Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!" With a twist of the little black handle the whole world erupted. We started to run away from the bridge, but looking up I could see that the sky was full of boulders—some as large as jeeps. They landed all around us with sickening thuds. It was a rain of stones and I twitched as they landed around us. I knew that a rock the size of my fist could be lethal, and lo and behold it was raining boulders of two-ton size! They were burying themselves in the turf around us. I gazed upward all the while, ostensibly to duck away from stones that might have endangered us. Finally, the gigantic stones stopped falling, and only gravel and dust remained. Woods and I looked at each other, silently acknowledging our stupidity, but most of all our good fortune at being alive.

I placed my life in jeopardy through my stupidity; I did the same to my sergeant. For that, there is no forgiveness.

The Pusan Perimeter, 1-19 August 1950, Haman, Korea

During August 1950, I took part in some of the most vicious fighting of the war. We were defending the southern part of the Pusan perimeter. It was a period of constant combat and work for the 77th ECC.

As the North Koreans advanced in July 1950, the U.S. and ROK forces were forced to retreat to the southeast to form a defensive position around the port of Pusan. This was truly a last stand. If the U.S. forces were forced to evacuate Pusan, the North Koreans would win. Pusan was a big port and the second largest city in South Korea. It had to be held.

Initially, we fought in the south-central part of the country near Sangju, but on 31 July 1950 the 25th Infantry Division was shifted suddenly to a new defensive sector in the southwest near Masan in order to stabilize the defensive position securing Pusan against a new NKPA (North Korean People's Army) threat from the west. The NKPA forces had broken through in the west and were threatening to outflank the UN forces in the south. The 24th Infantry Division, reinforced by the 27th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division, was already fighting in the area but losing ground steadily. In a brilliant move, the 25th Infantry Division moved 150 miles in two days just in time to hold the line.

The 24th Infantry Regiment was deployed on Subok-san, an imposing piece of high ground running across the corridor leading from Chinju through Masan and into Pusan. The enemy needed that high ground, which was its stumbling block on the way to

Troops of the 24th Infantry Regiment move toward the front line, 18 July 1950
RG 111, SC-343967

Pusan. Subok-san was a steep, treeless mountain. The terrain was rugged. Vehicles were confined to the roads, which were poor. The temperature was 110 degrees F. The tactical plans were inept and poorly suited to the terrain. Barrier and field fortification material was in limited supply and often simply not available. Our personnel were not conditioned to cope with the harsh terrain, the heat, and the shortage of water for bathing and drinking.

Shortly after the 24th RCT closed in on the southern end of the Pusan perimeter our first regimental commander, Col. Horton V. White, was sent back to Japan. I liked Col. White. He had always been a fair man, and he was a good commander, but he was 50 years old and Korea was not a place for a man of his age. Col. White was an intelligence officer who had previously worked for Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby, Douglas MacArthur's G-2, so he went back to Tokyo.

Col. White was replaced on 6 August 1950 by Col. Arthur S. Champeny. Col. Champeny was 57 when he assumed command; he was four years older than the 25th Division Commander, Maj. Gen. William B. Kean. I found Col. Champeny to be biased…and totally inefficient. The regiment did not do well under his command.

During the defense of the Pusan perimeter, the 24th Infantry lost its position only once when they evacuated Subok-san under heavy pressure from the enemy and with a lack of reinforcement by friendly troops. On this occasion, the regiment withdrew under the supervision of its white officers, who must accept a large part of the responsibility for the performance of the troops. It is inconsistent to attribute only the defeats of the 24th Infantry Regiment to its black troops. Officers accept the glory of success; they must also bear the onus of defeat.

Gradually, the Pusan perimeter became stronger. More UN troops arrived, and the gaps were filled. The line became better reinforced and took on aspects of trench warfare. Small attacks regained some ground from the North Koreans. The line stabilized. The North Koreans still pressed the attack, however, and the fighting was fierce. The issue remained in doubt until our amphibious landing at Inch'on took the North Koreans by surprise and cut their supply lines. Our job during this period was holding the line.

Naktong River Bridge, 6 August 1950, Near Masan, Korea

The war was becoming a habit and, God, what a grisly habit. We were a generation of ghosts. We had never had an opportunity to build, to create, or to structure. We went from college directly to combat, from Sunday school to slaughtering shed. We were blessed, I suppose, to have had a five-year interlude of peace—long enough

to sire two or three children, many of who were to mature fatherless.

We were quartered in a schoolhouse in Masan. We'd been there for several days. The regiment and division were in and around the town also. We weren't doing much and we needed the time for maintenance of equipment. We'd been mighty busy, first at Yech'on, then at Sangju, and then during the withdrawal into the Pusan perimeter. So maintenance it was. Early in the morning on 6 August, a message came in for a platoon-sized recon up to the bridge on the Naktong River. "More instructions after arriving."

Platoon-sized reconnaissance always interested me, so I decided to add my jeep to the small convoy carrying Lt. Lenon's platoon. We left about 0930. The trip to the bridge was uneventful and I called and reported this to division. The G-2 type responded that a battalion-sized North Korean unit was approaching and was about two miles from the bridge. He instructed us, "Hold at all cost. Deny the bridge to the enemy until relieved." This didn't worry me much because it was still in the forenoon and denying the bridge wasn't difficult, even with only one platoon.

I could see the elements of the enemy battalion moving toward us. Thousands of refugees were on the road in advance of the battalion. It was always the same. When the enemy moved, the civilian populace scurried before them. There were thousands of white-clad women, carrying suckling children on their hips and huge bundles of household goods on their heads. Once in a while one of the women would have a radio in the bundle to advise the enemy of our strength, weapons, locations, and general disposition. We were wise to that and the few men we left with our meager trains were to look for women using radios. If any were found they were summarily shot. No radios on this occasion, however.

Soldiers of the 5th RCT fire on North Korean positions near Taejon
RG 111, SC-349347

There were numerous foxholes on the bank facing the oncoming battalion. The plain was flat. The riverbanks were 20 to 30 feet higher than the

Thousands of refugees were on the road in advance of the battalion. It was always the same. When the enemy moved, the civilian populace scurried before them.

plain and roadbed. The enemy approached. We waited. And waited. The troops became antsy.

It's better after the firefight starts because once you're in action you function with a certain amount of automatic reflexes. I planned to let the battalion's point come to within 600 yards. Six hundred yards is good killing range where there's no cover, and it was far enough away, under those conditions, to make the enemy pay dearly for any advance. I knew we'd kill his point and make it impossible for him to advance in the daylight.

Engineer Road, 14 August 1950, Haman, Korea

Upon arriving at our new location in the southern part of the Pusan perimeter, I made a reconnaissance of the area and started a program to improve the roads, culverts, and bridges. The work kept the troops occupied and ensured the 24th RCT of clear passage on the MSR and auxiliary roads and trails. We stayed busy. I established priorities for work to be done in infrastructure, field fortifications, and other engineer works.

When I had gone over all of the 24th RCT area, I assigned a high priority to developing an access road to eliminate the bottleneck where the MSR dead-ended in front of the 24th RCT command post. The MSR ran for about three miles southeast from the town of Haman, and if the enemy ever cut that road, there was no way the troops could leave their positions by vehicle.

I discovered a trail about 14 feet wide that led off eastward from the MSR. The track indicated that it was used by farmers with their ox-drawn carts. The trail led up to a row of low hills and ended at a shale hogback, which precluded passage by vehicles. As the main roadwork wound down, we went to work vigorously on the trail, while another crew worked on the hogback. It was hard work because the shale was too hard to move, even with our bulldozer. I posted daily reports of our progress on the regimental situation map. Removal of the hogback would allow the trail to extend uninterrupted for several miles and finally rejoin the MSR. This would give the RCT another vehicle road to get supplies in or to move out.

I was concerned about the RCT being hemmed in with no roadway out of the Battle Mountain area. The 6th North Korean Infantry Division was exerting extreme pressure on the RCT, and the pressure seemed to be increasing from night to night. Our work on the trail intensified, and eventually we removed enough of the overburden to place a large demolition charge deep enough to remove the shale or at least to loosen it up.

I was a bit concerned. Shales and slates are difficult to blow because they're stratified, or layered. The spaces between the layers often contain water and fine silts that

cushion the effects of a demolition shock, dampening the explosion so that it's ineffective. Not so this time. After careful preparation we blew the obstruction. We blew it well, leaving only a lot of loose rock, which the dozer could handle.

Shortly after the big blow, a jeep rushed up to the demolition site, and a very excited colonel got out. It was the new regimental commander, Col. Champeny. When he saw me, the old man puffed up the hill shaking his finger at me.

He coughed, "I thought that noise was artillery. What are you doing? I told you we didn't need another road."

I advised the colonel that this was just a training project and that the notice of the blow was on his situation map and had been for two days.

Col. Champeny took a long, mean look at me and said, "I'm unhappy with you. You just do things the way you want."

I replied, "Sir, I serve the regiment well."

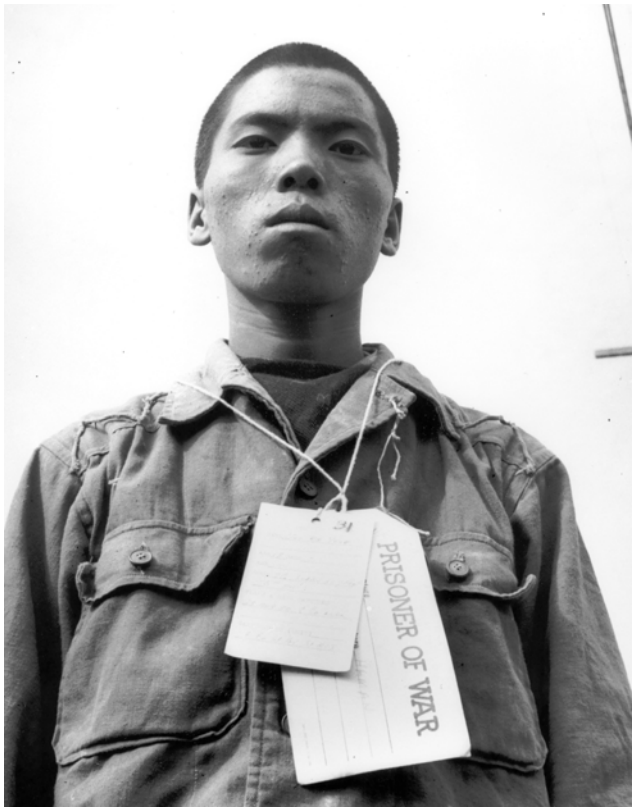
I was careful not to become contumacious, because it was easy to do with him. His face had become florid, and he turned and went down the hill. Fortunately, he had not told me not to open the road. His parting remark was, "I don't know what we'll ever need it for."

I beckoned for the troops to continue their work. It was my duty to maintain and construct roads in my area of responsibility. I always did that, and it was always good for the regiment that I did. I, too, hoped that the infantry would never need that narrow, slightly improved dirt strip that we named "Engineer Road," but it was available if and when.

I announced that the road was completed at the next regimental staff meeting and Col. Champeny glared at me in his ugliest manner. He advised his commanders and staff that the road was of no significance, and it would neither be needed nor used. He was wrong. Engineer Road proved to be invaluable in the fighting for Battle Mountain.

Engineers of the 77th Combat Engineer Battalion lay a single-apron barbed wire fence
RG 111, SC-359427

First Lieutenant Charles M. Bussey 77th Engineer Combat Company



A North Korean prisoner awaits transportation to a POW camp RG 111, SC-347027

Battle Mountain, 18 August 1950, Near Haman, Korea

Pound for pound the North Korean soldier was as good as any in the world. He was wily and tough. He was tremendously motivated and probably the best mortarman on the planet. The North Korean was trained to a razor's edge. Through the glasses I once watched an NKPA soldier dig a foxhole. He dug into the hillside with a crude half-shovel, deposited the soil into a large kerchief, and then moved away a few yards where he meticulously redistributed the soil and gravel. When he was finished, it was barely visible. The NKPA soldier was arrogant, confident, and highly capable. He was at home in the heat, the dust, and on the barren mountainsides.

For some reason our northern enemy wanted possession of Hill 625, which became known appropriately as "Battle Mountain." NKPA units attacked the hill nearly every other night, and on the odd night the 24th Infantry Regiment took the mountain back. It was dirty, bloody, and hot.

The 24th Infantry Regiment lost and regained that hill for nearly 45 days. They had no baths, very little drinking water, and seldom did they have clean clothes. Sunset provided the only respite from the hell-fire of the sun. It was a stinking conflict, with numerous changes of commanders at battalion and company level. It was impossible for the troops to identify with their officers or vice versa.

On the other hand, there were some dedicated and highly competent officers who led their men brilliantly, officers who respected the troops and were respected in return. Such an officer was Capt. Laurence Corcoran, the commander of Company C.

Larry Corcoran was a good-sized man with determination showing in his hard blue eyes. He was blond and strong, and he knew his business—a no-nonsense type of man. I had last seen him back at Gifu, a light year ago, and I noticed that he had lost a lot of weight. The same was true for most of us.

Larry mentioned his need for installation of mines, barbed wire, and trip flares. I knew he needed those items to help solidify his position. I could have provided the engineer support, except that I normally performed my activity at the request of the regimental plans and operations officer. However, I arranged to wire in Larry's Charlie Company anyway.

We set out a concentrated minefield, interspersed with trip flares, and anti-personnel mines to include bouncing betties. Lord, it was hot up on that hill—hotter than the hinges to the door of hell. It was slow

and difficult carrying mines and rolls of wire up those hills, particularly in that heat.

The troops were neither trained nor conditioned to function efficiently in the prevailing high temperature and humidity or in the rough terrain. It was particularly difficult for American soldiers to occupy hilltop positions where food, water, ammo, barbed wire, and other heavy items of equipment had to be manhandled. Somehow it had to be done; the stuff had to be transported and installed. There had been a time when regiment tables of organization and equipment called for mules, but modern technology won out over common sense. Accordingly, beasts of burden were no longer authorized, whereas soldiers were authorized to be beasts of burden. So, enterprising soldiers used cows or other indigenous transportation devices whenever possible.

When the regiment occupied Battle Mountain and its environs, the engineer commander was directed to round up and corral all the livestock the natives had left behind in their flight from their homes when the enemy came near. We rounded up cattle, pigs, and chickens. We corralled the animals where pasturage and water were available. Then I got a bright idea.

I realized that in many other parts of the world cattle were beasts of burden. Why not in Korea? Why not use the beefsteaks to carry significant loads up hills? One cow could carry the load of four or five soldiers without griping or bellyaching. I had two A-frames secured together and hung over the backs of the cows. We found that if we used the rings in their noses that the cattle wouldn't resist doing our bidding. We led the burdened animals up to the mountaintop positions. I'm sure that the animal lovers from home would take a dim view of the use to which we'd put the beasts, but in combat only the soldier is significant. From that day onward I expanded the use of the animals. They were used to transport all of our field fortifications, water, and ammunition to the line companies of the 24th Infantry Regiment.

The field fortifications stopped the enemy from storming Company C's positions. The anti-personnel mines interspersed in the barbed wire wounded or killed NKPA soldiers who came crawling with great caution or recklessly hurtling through the wire. The riflemen and machine gunners did their slaughtering under the eerie light of the trip flares. It became extremely difficult for the NKPA to dislodge the GIs from that hill. Our enemies paid an awesome price for every inch of Battle Mountain. That was probably the most expensive real estate in the world.

However, on 22 August 1950 things turned from bad to worse on Battle Mountain when a hellfire 120-mm mortar round came in. The big mortar round exploded about 40 feet above the deck with a ka-whump! Lt. Mathis and four good soldiers of the 24th were cut

Lord, it was hot up on that hill….It was slow and difficult carrying mines and rolls of wire up those hills, particularly in that heat.

down. With Mathis down, Larry Corcoran was the only officer left for duty in Company C until 30 August. Those were hard days and hard nights.

The casualty rate was devastating, and the replacements were kids, most of them 18 to 20 years of age without combat experience. Most of the replacements were not infantrymen. They came from the technical services: signal corps, ordnance, medical, whatever. The lack of combat training rendered the replacements less than fully effective.

The Army's personnel assignment and utilization policy specified only that replacements to the 24th Infantry Regiment be Negroes. It didn't matter if they were properly trained or were qualified in the proper skills. It only mattered that they were black. That policy guaranteed the weakening of the 24th RCT.

Immediately following the loss of Mathis came the loss of Lt. Anthes and another officer from Company E. These losses left a terrible leadership hole in the 1st and 2d battalions. The shortage of experienced junior officers, together with the rapid turnover of senior officers, really created a hole in the main line of resistance (MLR).

Wounded men who were ambulatory were of necessity returned to their units, often too soon—before their wounds were healed properly. That created a terrible morale problem, which militated against organizational efficiency.

In spite of all the negatives, however, Capt. Corcoran and a few other fine company-grade officers hung on, as is the hallmark of infantry officers and noncommissioned officers. One night Larry Corcoran lost his position when the NKPA overwhelmed him. He yielded, regrouped, counterattacked, and retook his position—all without the knowledge of battalion or regimental headquarters. For his outstanding leadership at Battle Mountain, Capt. Larry Corcoran was awarded the Silver Star medal.

The troops complained bitterly about the presence of decaying enemy bodies in front of their positions in that withering, rotting environment. The regimental commander ordered the engineers to obtain quicklime and provide it to the line units immediately. The lime was used to decompose the enemy bodies. What had been bodies a few days ago were reduced to a few long bones, some rags, and some grease spots. It was grisly business but it satisfied the troops. It also was demeaning to those fallen soldiers.

On the night of 31 August—1 September, the 6th North Korean Infantry Division attacked in force and moved the 24th Infantry Regiment off Hill 625. Col. Champeny was one of the first people to leave through the cut we had blown to create Engineer Road. He was followed by at least two of his infantry battalions. The road Col. Champeny had derided had saved him and his troops.

Later, the regiment came back to take Battle Mountain by way of Engineer Road. One battalion of the 27th Infantry Regiment reinforced the 24th RCT in retaking the hill. The NKPA suffered great losses from our counterattack. There were no more mass attacks by the North Koreans on Hill 625 after the night of 31 August 1950. We paid a price also. Over 500 American casualties were suffered on Battle Mountain during the month of August 1950.

Once Hill 625 was properly fortified and we had a tight grip on it the mountain was never lost again. Superb duty performance by a few officers and some valiant enlisted men made it possible to retain our positions until the Army broke out of the Pusan perimeter in mid-September 1950. We held because of some tough NCOs and a handful of dedicated officers—Capt. Larry Corcoran of Company C; Capt. Charles Piedra of Heavy Weapons Company, 1st Battalion; Capt. Roger Walden of Company F, 2d Battalion; and Capt. Mike Keiler of Heavy Mortar Company. All of these fine officers contributed to making good things happen in spite of the very transient leadership at regimental, battalion, and company levels.

The great pity of it all was that so many good men had to die needlessly because the U.S. Army refused to send qualified white combat soldiers as replacements to a black infantry regiment, even in desperate combat.

Battle Mountain was certainly one of the most fought over and exchanged pieces of real estate in the annals of American military history. Pork Chop Hill, later on in the Korean War, and Hamburger Hill in the Vietnam War, also were scenes of intense combat. There is no use arguing over which was the hardest—they *all* were hard.

Men of the 77th Engineer Combat Company use explosives to try and dislodge enemy troops taking cover along the banks of the Hantan River
Engineer School, 148-16-1